

READER



“I’M IN
HEAVEN
RIGHT
NOW”

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taps into the root
of all black music.

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

“DOES JOURNALISM HAVE a future?” Jill Lepore asked in the most recent issue of the *New Yorker*, as prankster turned media innovator Jonah Peretti laid off 15 percent of his workforce at BuzzFeed and then refused to pay most former employees their paid time off. Meanwhile, we’re over here adding pages to our print edition, launching a podcast, and tracking gains in Web traffic month after month (after month). (We also expanded our staff—Davon Clark, welcome to the graphic design team!)

What’s the *Reader* got that nobody else seems to? You folks.

I’m not naive (trust me), nor do I believe our alternative newsweekly to be immune to the ravages of capitalism and the national

disaffection for journalism that Lepore and Peretti point to in their own ways. I’ve put several of my own publications down, watched freelance paychecks dwindle, faced increasing antagonism for asking basic questions of authority. Perhaps most horrifying, I’ve faced the prospect of either doing the work for free or choosing to live in a world where the work doesn’t get done.

Yet we’ve seized the chance at the *Reader* to envision a different world, and the whole city seems intent on making it reality. Does journalism have a future? It just might, Jill. We’ve got four pages of very tiny print filled with the names of people who seem to think so. We’ve also got a special letters section, where some of them

have stated their support quite clearly. We’re honored.

But the real appreciation for your support shines through our pages and on our website. Listen to our first-ever podcast the **BACK ROOM DEAL** at chicagoreader.com/backroomdeal (or Spotify, Stitcher, or Apple) for the complete scoop on the Chicago elections from Ben Joravsky and Maya Dukmasova. Read their in-depth, ward-level reporting on our pages. Check out our photographic essay on the rent-control ban referendum in the First and 26th Wards. Read up on Toni Preckwinkle’s mayoral campaign. And don’t overlook our coverage of what makes this city truly great: performers like Angel Bat Dawid, playwrights



like Ike Holter, and eateries like Irving Park cafe Finom.

Finally, I speak for the whole editorial staff when I say, from the bottom of our hearts: thank you. —ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

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ON THE COVER: PHOTO BY LESLIE FREMPONG.
FOR MORE OF FREMPONG'S WORK, GO TO
LESLIEFREMPONG.COM.

LETTERS

To the editor,
I've been reading this paper every week for about 35 years. It's a staple in my life with lots of information you can't get anywhere else or any other newspaper. That's a fact! I remember before I was able to afford a car. I would hop on CTA, get a transfer, go to Hyde Park or ride the el to Fullerton stop to get my weekly Reader paper.

So. Please keep printing this paper.

—TEXIE WASHINGTON-DORN

To the editor,
We need a strong intelligent voice in this city as exemplified by the columns of Ben Joravsky.

—RICHARD KATZ

To the editor,
Please keep the Reader going!

The Reader has been my weekly addiction for over 25 years. Haven't missed an issue in that time—when out of town, I'd have someone pick it up for me.

It's been my go-to for all things Chicago and to keep up with politics and the arts. I've even clipped and kept so many articles because they're keepers!

—AIMEE BASS

To the editor,
As lead author of the U of Chicago report cited in this great piece ["Why won't City Hall fight for Chicago's homegrown music scene?," January 24, 2019], I just wanted to note that in addition to providing basic economic stats, it also, more importantly, emphasized the importance of—and provided measures for—diversity, quality of acts (using critics' polls), popularity (using various stats), venue size,

availability of tickets, # of local bands, etc.—in evaluating the vitality of live music scenes in cities. The report is available at <https://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/chicago-music-city>

—LARRY ROTHFIELD
(COMMENT SUBMITTED ONLINE)

To the editor,
Wow. Krupa said "day one Trump supporter." Cue the collective gasp.

How much did Madigan & Quinn pay the Reader for this pro-Quinn article ["Somebody somebody sent," January 24, 2019]?

Maybe the 13th Ward likes the "workerbee type?" Does "workerbee" stand for "defendant in multiple costly lawsuits?"

How many investigations are underway right now for Marty Quinn's ethics violations, sexual harassment and retaliation problems?

How about those lawsuits that Quinn is named in and the arrest and public firing of his "political consultant" brother? You know, the one who was strong-arming all those signatures?

Uh-oh, Mr. Madigan. And bigger uh-oh to Marty Quinn.

—C. ROBIN CLAIRE
(COMMENT SUBMITTED ONLINE)

Please address all correspondence intended for print to the Editor, Chicago Reader, 2930 S. Michigan, Suite 102, Chicago IL 60616 or via e-mail at letters@chicagoreader.com (Please use the subject header "To the editor.") When space permits, we will print your letters, edited for brevity and clarity, in future editions of the paper.



TO CONTACT ANY READER
EMPLOYEE, E-MAIL:
(FIRST INITIAL)(LAST NAME)
@CHICAGOREADER.COM

PUBLISHER TRACY BAIM
EDITOR IN CHIEF ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE
MANAGING EDITOR, PRINT SUJAY KUMAR
MANAGING EDITOR, DIGITAL KAREN HAWKINS
DEPUTY EDITOR KATE SCHMIDT
CREATIVE LEAD SUE KWONG
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JAMIE RAMSAY
CULTURE EDITOR AIMEE LEVITT
MUSIC EDITOR PHILIP MONTORO
ASSOCIATE EDITOR JAMIE LUDWIG
SENIOR WRITERS DEANNA ISAACS, BEN JORAVSKY, MIKE SULA
STAFF WRITERS MAYA DUKMASOVA, LEOR GALIL
GRAPHIC DESIGNER DAVON CLARK
SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR BRIANNA WELLEN
MUSIC LISTINGS COORDINATOR LUCA CIMARUSTI
FILM LISTINGS COORDINATOR PATRICK FRIEL
THEATER ASSIGNMENTS EDITOR CATEY SULLIVAN
CONTRIBUTORS
DAVID ANTHONY, ED BLAIR, DAVE CANTOR, LUCA CIMARUSTI, ISA GIALLORENZO, ANDREA GRONVALL, JUSTIN HAYFORD, JACK HELBIG, IRENE HSIAO, DAN JAKES, MONICA KENDRICK, STEVE KRAKOW, MAX MALLER, BILL MEYER, SCOTT MORROW, J.R. NELSON, MARISSA OBERLANDER, LEAH PICKETT, JAMES PORTER, BEN SACHS, DMITRY SAMAROV, KEVIN WARWICK, ALBERT WILLIAMS

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL
JOHN DUNLEVY
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & PROGRAMS
KRISTEN KAZA
OFFICE MANAGER
S. NICOLE LANE

ADVERTISING
312-392-2970, DISPLAY-ADS@CHICAGOREADER.COM
CLASSIFIEDS: SNLANE@CHICAGOREADERCORP.COM

SALES MANAGER PATTI FLYNN
SENIOR ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVE
AMY MATHENY
ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVES
LENI MANAA-HOPPENWORTH, NATHANIEL SMITH
CLIENT RELATIONSHIP MANAGER
TED PIEKARZ

NATIONAL ADVERTISING
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DISTRIBUTION CONCERNS
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STM READER, LLC
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SECRETARY JESSICA STITES
AT-LARGE SLADJANA VUCKOVIC

CONSULTANT CAROL E. BELL

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Police arrest Divvy rider Joshua Thomas last August. EBONY SENAI HAWKINS

TRANSPORTATION

Blue-bike blues

Advocates say ticketing data proves CPD used racial profiling in its efforts to catch Divvy thieves.

By JOHN GREENFIELD

On the evening of August 18 last year, Eboni Senai Hawkins, cofounder of Chicago's chapter of the black bicycle group Red Bike and Green, witnessed Joshua Thomas, a 22-year-old African-American, being stopped by police while riding a Divvy bike-share cycle on the sidewalk near Chicago Avenue and Rush Street. The officers handcuffed and frisked Thomas, called in the serial number on the baby-blue bike, and discovered it was stolen. They arrested Thomas, who was later sentenced to two days in jail.

During the height of that summer's Divvy theft crisis, Senai Hawkins argued that police were targeting young black men for sidewalk-riding tickets as a strategy to recover hot

bikes. She noted that people of all races pedal on sidewalks downtown, where hectic multilane streets put cyclists at risk, but she asserted that white sidewalk riders are rarely ticketed, let alone handcuffed and searched. "In no way is it OK for the Chicago police to enforce [a crackdown due to] the fact that Divvy has a technology issue."

Soon afterward I spoke with black Old Town resident Hakeem Appling, 24, who was also riding a Divvy on the sidewalk near Chicago and Rush on July 18 when he was detained, cuffed, frisked, ticketed, and arrested for possession of a stolen bike. Appling argued that his skin color was a factor in the stop. "That's harassment."

Catrina Hampton, 23, a vehicle transporter for Hertz, was yet another African-American who was ticketed for sidewalk biking on a Divvy near Chicago and Rush on August 9. She said she was handcuffed and searched, but the police didn't call in the number on her Divvy.

All told, 23 of the 30 adults ticketed for sidewalk riding in the two downtown police districts during July and August of last year were African-American, including 20 black men, according to records the city provided earlier this month. That's about 77 percent of the ticket recipients in a city that's roughly a third African-American.

Meanwhile only five non-Hispanic whites were ticketed. That's approximately 17 percent of recipients, although whites also make up about a third of the city. (Of the other two people ticketed, one was Asian, while the other had no race listed on his ticket.)

Romanian immigrant Samuel Baltes, 21, was one of only two white men ticketed. On July 20, Baltes was biking down the sidewalk on Chicago near Rush on his old beater while making food deliveries for Postmates. Suddenly a squad car whipped around the corner to block his path. He said the officers wrote him a \$50 ticket but he wasn't cuffed or frisked.

Upward of 500 Divvies went missing last summer due to the shortsighted decision to remove a key piece of security hardware from their docks, according to city e-mails the *Reader* obtained in September. Soon afterward Divvy sped up the pace of reinstallation, wrapping up by the end of November, and, thankfully, the bike-share problem seems to be behind us.

Arrests for possession of stolen Divvies peaked in July and August, when more than 120 adults were charged citywide, according to the anonymous crime blog CWB Chicago. Of the 30 people ticketed for sidewalk riding downtown in those months, eight were arrested for possession of stolen bikes—all of them African-Americans on Divvies.

The CPD says it has used sidewalk biking enforcement to recover stolen cycles.

But after learning that 23 out of those 30 people were African-American, Senai Hawkins and other black bike advocates say the data confirms their suspicions: police have been unfairly singling out African-Americans who cycle downtown for tickets. "How else would you interpret it?" she asked.

David Griggs, who leads the monthly South Side Critical Mass bike rides, noted that the *Chicago Tribune* found that officers have written exponentially higher numbers of sidewalk-riding citations in some communities of color. Last summer a CPD representative admitted that this was due to bike enforcement being used as a pretext for searches in high-crime areas.

After seeing the downtown ticketing numbers, Griggs said, "It's disheartening to know police are targeting black riders wherever they may ride, not just on the south and west sides."

However, after I reported on the Appling and Thomas cases on Streetsblog last summer, CWB Chicago ran a post arguing that racial bias wasn't a factor in those stops. It pointed

out that the area around the Chicago Avenue Red Line station is designated as a crime hot spot by the CPD, so it has a 24/7 police presence.

A CPD representative confirmed this area is heavily policed due to numerous assault cases last year. Most recently, on December 9, a group of teens attacked three bystanders on the el platform, fracturing one man's eye socket. Eight of the 30 ticketing incidents, including half of the arrests, occurred within this zone. CWB also noted that Appling and Thomas had each been arrested several times in the area for various offenses.

Prior arrest histories may have informed officers' decisions to stop some of the other 28 downtown sidewalk riders. But that doesn't necessarily explain why the cyclists who were ticketed, but not arrested, were still three times as likely to be black than white.

CPD spokesman Howard Ludwig asserted that racial profiling didn't play a role in decisions on whom to stop last summer because officers had legitimate reasons to suspect some of the African-Americans who were ticketed had stolen bikes. "The CPD issues citations for riding on the sidewalk . . . without regard to race," he said. "Reasonable suspicion is required ahead of any investigatory stop."

"During the period of increased Divvy thefts last summer, officers were under guidance to be on the lookout for Divvy bikes with bent or broken spokes, which is an indicator that the bike had been [pried from the docks]," Ludwig added. However, it's highly unlikely that a police officer would be able to spot faulty spokes on the spinning wheels of a moving Divvy.

CDOT, which oversees Divvy and may have provided that guidance, declined to comment.

Karen Sheley, director of ACLU of Illinois's police practices project, told me the lopsided downtown bike enforcement numbers do indicate a racial equity problem. "Looking at this relatively small sample, the racial disparities reflect the disparities we've been concerned about in other, larger data sets for years, including driver and pedestrian stops across the city," she said. "We also have to question whether enforcing low-level infractions as part of a broken-windows policy is really what the CPD should be doing right now. And if they are, that should be part of the public debate."

John Greenfield edits the transportation news website Streetsblog Chicago.
 @greenfieldjohn



COURTESY STERLING BAY

POLITICS

Over one billion reasons

Spending plans for the TIF money Rahm's giving to Lincoln Yards

By BEN JORAVSKY

There were at least 1.3 billion reasons to oppose the Lincoln Yards TIF deal—until, under intense pressure from local residents, Sterling Bay scrapped plans to build a soccer stadium.

So that means—one reason to oppose down, and another, oh, 1.3 billion reasons left to go.

That 1.3 billion is the money it will cost you to build Lincoln Yards—a project that nobody other than the developers has asked for.

Welcome to the next installment in my multipart series on the making of TIFs in Mayor Rahm's Chicago—also known as the fleecing of Chicagoans by its not-so-beloved mayor as he dashes out the door for greener pastures.

I'll get to that \$1.3 billion, but first, to review...

We've already learned that TIFs raise your property taxes, even as the mayor swears up and down that they don't.

They're intended to eradicate blight in low-income communities, but instead they largely underwrite upscale developments in already gentrifying areas (like the near north side between Lincoln Park and Bucktown).

They annually divert hundreds of millions of property tax dollars from the schools, parks, fire department, and police.

Every TIF contract is approved by the City Council's finance committee, whose chair until recently, Alderman Ed Burke, has hit up TIF recipients for his property tax appeal business. Or maybe they voluntarily hired Burke's law firm to curry his favor—guess we'll have to wait for his corruption trial to find out.

And now, I'll reveal how much Rahm's latest TIFs will cost you and how the mayor's proposing to spend your property tax dollars. Don't blame me—I'm only the messenger.

The bottom line is—as I said—\$1.3 billion. Well, actually, it's \$2.4 billion.

That's \$1.3 billion for the Cortland/Chicago River TIF district, which will go to Sterling Bay's Lincoln Yards deal. Also, there's \$1.1 billion for the 78—a South Loop development that I call Rezko Field. 'Cause Tony Rezko, the notorious fixer, used to own the land.

As a general practice, I think we should name all TIF deals after convicted felons. Nothing quite symbolizes corruption in Chicago like the tax increment financing program.

Most attention has focused on Lincoln Yards—largely because Sterling Bay's ignited local opposition with its proposal to build a massive complex (50-story skyscrapers included) on 55 acres in the heavily industrial area just west of Lincoln Park.

So I'm going to concentrate on the Lincoln Yards budget. But don't worry, I'll get into the sordid details of the \$1.1 billion Rezko Field (or Roosevelt/Clark TIF) another time.

The budget for Lincoln Yards has been a work in progress. At a public hearing in November, the city estimated it would spend about \$800 million on the project.

Then in December, the city released its official Cortland/Chicago River Redevelopment Plan, an 83-page document written in dense legalese.

On page 24 under a chart headlined Estimated Cost (in big bold print) there's an itemized list of expenses that totals \$900 million (also written in big bold print).

So somehow, in less than a month, the price tag rose \$100 million.

But wait! There's a footnote that links to some fine print at the bottom of the page that says "in addition to the costs listed in the table above," the project "shall include an estimated total of \$400 million in additional financing costs, including without limitation interest expense, capitalized interest and costs associated with optional redemptions."

In other words, we're paying for the borrowing costs. In TIF deals, as in used cars—beware of the fine print, people.

At this point I'd like to give another shout-out to Dave Glowacz, who writes the Inside Chicago Government blog. He's the guy who discovered the \$400 million fine print while plowing through the contract.

He's also the guy who discovered that the Joint Review Board was meeting to discuss the TIF—something the city neglected to mention. That enabled dozens of residents to show up to the Joint Review Board meeting a couple weeks back to protest. Not that it did any good, 'cause the board rubber-stamped the deal.

Anyway, the first item in the estimated costs should fall under the category of you've got to be freaking kidding me!

It's where we learn that Rahm's proposing to commit \$25 million of your hard-earned property tax dollars to pay for Sterling Bay's lawyers, publicists, architects, and marketers.

Marketing? It's bad enough that we have to stomach their propaganda. Even worse that we have to pay for it.

Then there's another \$25 million to buy property and demolish buildings. I call this the buy-and-obliterate the Hideout (and other local properties) fund.

The Hideout's the bar—owned by Katie and Tim Tuten—that hosts my First Tuesdays show with Mick Dumke and has been threatened with extinction by the project. For all I know, it's getting punished for putting us onstage. Like I've been telling you, Katie and Tim—get yourself a good eminent-domain lawyer.

Then there's \$22.5 million set aside for "job training, retraining, welfare-to-work" and "day care services" for low-income employees who are working for businesses in the TIF district. The purpose of these programs is to make sure that people from communities other than the near north side benefit from the TIF.

These are good programs. And I support them. But Sterling Bay, not the public, should be paying for them in exchange for getting the TIF handout. In other words, it's not really a community benefit if Sterling Bay just passes the cost on to the public.

The largest expense is the \$800 million that's earmarked for "public works & improvements." The budget doesn't specify what they are—presumably that means building bridges, streets, sewers, etc, to accommodate the project.

Look, no one told Sterling Bay it had to build such a massive project. If it can't afford the infrastructure, it should scale the damn thing back.

By chance, the *Sun-Times* recently published a poll of the most important issues on the minds of Chicago voters as we head toward the February 26 mayoral election. In descending order, they are crime, city finances, schools, political corruption, race relations, and police reform.

Needless to say, supporting a plan to fork over billions to Rahm's developer pals didn't make the list.

@joravben

POLITICS

Can #AnybodyButMitts win in the 37th Ward?

Incumbent alderman faces two challengers and a new hashtag.

By MAYA DUKMASOVA

As the wind chill dipped below zero and the snow piled on last week, small teams of youth hit the streets of the 37th Ward. They fanned out across unplowed residential blocks of Austin, West Garfield Park, and West Humboldt Park to tell locals not to reelect incumbent alderman Emma Mitts. The teens, some of whom have been involved with the #NoCopAcademy campaign to prevent a \$95 million police and fire training facility from being built in the ward, have organized under the hashtag #AnybodyButMitts. Just as when, in 2016, the #ByeAnita campaign energized Cook County voters to give state's attorney Anita Alvarez the boot without specifically endorsing Kim Foxx, so too this youth-led effort against Mitts isn't an endorsement of either of her opponents—CPS teacher Tara Stamps (who's challenging Mitts for the second time) and newcomer Deondre Rutues.

The youth are working with community organizers Page May and Debbie Southorn, both deeply rooted in the city's police and prison abolition movement through groups like Assata's Daughters and the People's Response Team. As they knocked on doors and tried to talk to people darting through the frigid streets, they handed out flyers that spelled out the basics about an alderman's role and criticized Mitts for her closeness with Mayor Rahm Emanuel. The flyer also offered a checklist of the three aldermanic candidates' stances on various issues.

"We're trying to do rounds where we hit the same people at least two times—closer to four if possible," May explained as a couple of the girls canvassing finished a conversation at a house on the 400 block of North Avers. "That's what we read it takes to get someone who's not planning to vote to vote. It takes four interactions."

A man pulled up in a large beige pickup truck packed with lawn mowers, curious about the

canvassers. Lavon, 50, didn't want to give his last name but said he'd lived his whole life in this corner of the ward. The unplowed streets, he said, are "the norm. Everybody knows that we're the most taxed and the least serviced." He looked over the flyer May handed him. He hadn't heard of Stamps or Rutues before.

Lavon said he votes "every now and then," but not because he truly has faith in any candidate. He's not thrilled with the job Mitts has done for the ward, but he said the unemployment and crime in the neighborhood aren't just her problems to solve.

"I can't point to Emma as the sole culprit because it's a systemic thing that has been going on for the last 50 years," he said. "It's a conglomerate of people who have taken an oath to do one thing but are doing another thing."

Nevertheless, as he chatted with May and the other canvassers he didn't seem too cynical. "The change has to start somewhere," he said. He'd like the alderman "to take all of the resources that are divvied up for the neighborhoods, to put them here, and watch the young people who are considered to be the future blossom into something," he said. "Or just be truthful enough to tell somebody, look them in the face and tell them: I'm not gonna do shit for you."

As for the police academy? Lavon scoffed. "That's just a money ploy," he said.

Before driving off Lavon advised the canvassers to connect with organizations based in the ward and to involve longtime residents in their efforts. Two of the youth canvassers in this group live in the 37th, but May, Southorn, and another canvasser, 16-year-old Destiny Bell, live elsewhere in the city.

As the group hustled to knock on doors one block to the east, Bell argued that it doesn't matter that she happens to live in the Sixth Ward on the south side. "I care, even if I don't live over here, I still care. 'Cause it's still my people," she said after speaking to another



CPS teacher Tara Stamps came within 600 votes of beating Emma Mitts in 2015. This year she's on the ballot again but she faces a tough battle as Mitts has garnered much of the union support that had previously gone to Stamps. **MAYA DUKMASOVA**

resident through a glass front door. "If you're alderman you're representing your community, you're supposed to get them what they need, not just what's gonna make you look good or help your campaign. . . . And I feel that Emma Mitts—she's not doing that. So that's why I'm here."

Around the ward, yard signs for Mitts aren't as plentiful as they are for incumbents elsewhere in Chicago, but there's no question that the alderman is in a prime position to saturate her turf with campaign literature and canvassers if she wanted to. The web of political funds she has access to stands at more than \$165,000 and she's received tens of thousands of dollars from labor and business groups, including many liquor stores in her ward (who rely on her good graces as the chair of the Committee on License and Consumer Protection), as well as Governor J.B. Pritzker, indicted alderman Ed Burke, and Mayor Rahm Emanuel. Many of her critics see this as a reward for her steadfast commitment to supporting mayoral agendas.

Mitts, 63, was first appointed alderman by Richard M. Daley in 2000, after her predecessor, Percy Giles, was convicted of taking bribes. As the *Tribune* put it at the time, Mitts had been "plucked from obscurity" in the city's Streets and Sanitation department. She was the 25th alderperson to be appointed by Daley and was written off as a mayoral rubber stamp almost immediately. Since then, Mitts hasn't cultivated a reputation for independence from the mayor, voting 100 percent of the time with Emanuel on divided votes over the last several years.

Nevertheless, some residents praise her record on economic development. Mitts fought to bring the first Walmart in Chicago to her ward in 2006 (and fought against the big-box

ordinance that required living wages for its employees for a grand total of seven weeks before Mayor Daley's veto). A variety of fast-food and other franchises has opened along the commercial thoroughfares of the ward during her tenure, as has the ward's first library. A transportation seating manufacturer has brought in some 900 jobs on her watch.

Perhaps the surest way of evaluating enthusiasm about her is to look back at past elections. Her first time vying for voter approval—which happened in a special election in February 2001—she beat three opponents with 80 percent of the vote. At the time, there were almost 34,000 registered voters in the ward, and about a quarter of them cast a ballot in the special election. Over the course of the 2003, 2007, and 2011 elections, the number of registered voters in the ward eroded, but an increasing percentage of them came out to vote. Mitts kept facing challengers on the ballot, and she kept being reelected, but by narrower and narrower margins. In 2015 she found herself in a runoff against Stamps, and ultimately won by 600 votes. A third of the registered voters in the ward came out to vote in that runoff election—more than at any other time in the previous 15 years.

Securing an interview with Mitts proved to be a challenge. After days of back-and-forth phone calls and text messages with her media and legislative affairs coordinator, A.L. Smith—which included an invitation to see Mitts at a community meeting that arrived nine minutes before the start of that meeting—I finally got 20 minutes on the phone. Smith was also on the conference call and, though she didn't want her comments to be on the record, chimed in so frequently to help Mitts make her points that the alderman finally told her: "Let me speak."

Mitts said she hadn't heard of the

#AnybodyButMitts campaign but she's as committed as ever to bringing the police and fire training academy to the ward. She said youth opposed to the plan "have the issue of being angry with the police," and that the police academy would allay their mistrust.

"Once the facility will be built we'll find an opportunity for [youth] to engage," she said. As for concerns that construction wouldn't employ locals, Mitts said a plan to guarantee 50 percent of the jobs to people from the surrounding west-side neighborhoods is in the works.

Mitts said she was proud of her record of bringing new businesses and charter schools to the ward. She denied that she's hard to reach, listing a litany of regular meetings she holds with ward residents. But she said she's not surprised to hear some people complaining. "They're always gonna complain—I've never known folks not to." She said she's aware of the candidates competing with her but that she's focusing on her own work. Is she confident about her reelection?

"I'm never confident about anything," she said flatly. "I just keep working and trying to do all that I can do every day for the community."

Mitts's opponents certainly disagree. Rutues, 31, grew up in Austin and works the night shift as a manager at UPS. After college he wanted to give back to the neighborhood. He mentored kids and got involved in racial justice and anti-violence demonstrations. In 2016 he launched a monthly performing arts showcase to generate money to pay for neighborhood cleanups in Austin and was discouraged at the lack of support from local aldermen, including Mitts. "When I went to the alderman to ask for help with that I realized how big a deal it is to try to get help," he says, "They gave me the run-around." Then Donald Trump, who had no prior political experience, became president, and Rutues decided to take a stab at public officialdom himself. "Being frustrated [with incumbent aldermen] was part of the catalyst, but when Donald Trump won I was like, OK, if he could do it, I could do it."

Initially, Rutues said, he asked elected officials for advice on how to run for office—he admits he was naive about how these systems work. He said he got nothing helpful from 29th Ward alderman Chris Taliaferro and state rep Camille Lilly.

And so Rutues has done all of the campaign grunt work himself, collecting 1,700 nominating petition signatures, "all of them off the

muscle, myself," he says proudly. His only endorsement so far has come from the Chicago Alliance for Animals, and he doesn't yet have a candidate committee to fund-raise. He's doing most of the preelection canvassing alone with a stack of door hangers.

Rutues thinks the 37th Ward deserves better than what they're getting from Mitts. "I see the business she brings to the community and I see them shutter," he says. "The same fast-food restaurants." He also thinks it's time for her to stop celebrating the Walmart that came in more than a decade ago. In a recent radio interview, he pointed out that the same store had recently been shut down due to a rat infestation. Rutues wants to see more juice and salad bars, meditation spaces, and art galleries in the ward.

"I don't like the fact that there isn't a plethora of black businesses or small business ownership in our community, which in other community are staples," Rutues says. He's trying to start a Rotary Club in the area to stimulate local business development. If he were elected he said he'd work to pass a property tax freeze in poor neighborhoods, restructure the city ticketing program that leads to high levels of bankruptcy among African-Americans, and fight TIF deals that funnel money away from public schools and other local government services. He's against the police academy. "There's no reason that \$95 million should be spent in this ward and it not be spent on mental health resources first," he said.

Four years ago, Stamps, 50, ran a headline-grabbing campaign against Mitts with significant endorsements and financial support from labor unions, including her own Chicago Teachers Union. A CPS teacher, Stamps had made national news in an election year that was deemed to be a "referendum" on Rahm Emanuel for his deeply divisive school and mental health clinic closures (the former Mitts condoned, the latter she voted for).

Though she succeeded in forcing Mitts into a runoff, her loss was deflating and left her questioning whether the effort had been worth it "because of the toll it took on my family, the toll it took on me—just exhaustion, disappointment, heartbreak, not being able to spend time with my family."

Though she eventually rallied, helping found the Greater Austin Independent Political Organization in 2017 and developing civic engagement classes for the community, Stamps has kept a relatively low profile since her defeat.



But perhaps she's not meant to fade into obscurity. The daughter of legendary community organizer Marion Stamps—who helped bring Harold Washington to City Hall by organizing residents of Cabrini-Green, brokered gang truces, and also ran for alderman—Stamps has a lot of fight in her. She launched her run against Mitts in October—well into campaign season—because, she says, her family and ward residents asked her to. With no money and very little manpower, she had a lot of catching up to do. She admitted she had some doubts about her chances, asking herself, "Did I do enough in the ward to stay relevant? And I think, honestly, there's more I could have done, but I also think we have an amazing opportunity still [to beat Mitts]."

Stamps successfully fought off a petition challenge, made the ballot, and has been focusing on canvassing and phone banking every day with the help of a couple dozen volunteers. Though other labor groups have thrown their support behind Mitts—likely because she's supported various TIF deals, which created union construction jobs—the CTU is endorsing Stamps and she's expecting a significant donation to her campaign. Longtime Cook County clerk David Orr has also shown his support. Most of all, Stamps says, she's encouraged by the feedback she's getting from ward residents, some of whom seem to be more interested in her now that she doesn't have so much big money and press swirling around her.

In the waning light of a freezing day a couple of weeks ago, Stamps shuffled along a stretch of West Hirsch Street, her nephews and one of her sons spreading out through surrounding blocks to knock on every door and hand out glossy cards with her photo and platform printed on them. Stamps opposes the police academy plan and charter school expansion,

and she's promising to fight to raise the minimum wage, push for stronger police oversight, and improve mental health care. She wants to see more social services and jobs for formerly incarcerated people who come back disproportionately to this part of town.

Ringling the bells of a two-flat on North Luna and hearing no response, she left a card stuck in the door and prepared to move on. Then a window opened up on the second floor and a man stuck his head out. Stamps shouted up an introduction: "I'm a teacher, I ran before!" I asked if he planned to vote.

"Uh, you know, politics, it's just . . ." he began, then paused. "I been voting 30 years, and nothing's changed." He noted that crime has gone down in the area in recent years but that ward services are so lackluster that "I don't even expect anything." He said he couldn't say what Mitts has been up to lately.

Stamps is used to apathy and cynicism. "I know you're frustrated," she said, her voice booming through the quiet street. "But until we come up with something else better, we gotta try to make this system work for us."

"Yeah," the man in the window agreed, nodding.

"Policy is what dictates our personal choices in life," Stamps continued. "This government shutdown—we don't have no control over that, but is it impacting our life? Yes. We gotta participate in this process even if we're pissed off. We got every right to be pissed off—we've been given the short end of the stick. But we've got to fight back, we gotta use whatever little stick we got."

"It's not just Trump," the man observed. "It was before Trump."

"No, it's not just Trump," Stamps agreed. "It's the system! And it's the people that allow Trump, just like it's the people that allow Rahm and allowed Daley. For me the people that are more guilty [are] not just the person at the head, it's everybody sitting around, knowing it's a bad idea, saying, 'Yeah, do that,' 'cause you're too much of a chump, or you're too much of a pump, to say, 'No, I'm not rolling with that, I'm not voting for that, I know that's wrong, I'm not doing that.'"

Seeing that the man was ready to close the window and get out of the cold, Stamps wrapped up her oration with one last dig at Mitts. "They act like these little seats is a fiefdom and they get to keep 'em," she said sarcastically. "No, you need to do right, and if you don't do right you need to go." 

 @mdoukmas

POLITICS

Damage control

Can Preckwinkle distance herself from the machine?

By **SAMANTHA SMYLIE**



Toni Preckwinkle
by ERIK DAVIS

Toni Preckwinkle is the front-runner in the race for mayor of Chicago, sort of. According to a *Sun-Times* poll conducted by We Ask America, Preckwinkle and Daley are “nominal” front-runners with Preckwinkle at 12.7 percent and Daley at 12.1. The We Ask America poll also found that in hypothetical runoffs, Preckwinkle would lose—though not by much—to both Mendoza and Daley.

“Every poll now has her in the mid to low teens. That is a disaster,” said Tom Bowen of New Chicago Consulting. He said that for Preckwinkle—a well-known African-American woman who was elected Cook County Board president by Chicago voters in 2010, 2014, and 2018 and maintained high favorability ratings—that is a red flag. (A partner in Bowen’s firm is a consultant for the Gery Chico campaign, though Bowen does not work with the campaign.) “She tried to be the front-runner to push other people out. None of that has worked.”

The projections are slim, but Preckwinkle’s got a war chest nearly \$3 million strong and second only to the holdings of Daley, who as a former presidential chief of staff and commerce secretary and former president of SBC Communications has big-money connections both local and national—not to mention that he’s a Daley. Still, the 71-year-old Cook County Board president has hit a rough patch in her campaign.

In her first television campaign ad for the mayoral race she claimed to have been pivotal in exposing the killing of Laquan McDonald. The advertisement was criticized as exaggerating Preckwinkle’s role, particularly since

she failed to push for the release of dashcam footage before a judge ordered the tape’s release. The *Reader’s* Maya Dukmasova also reported on a Preckwinkle fund-raising e-mail that sought to capitalize on the case of Cyntoia Brown, a Tennessee woman serving a life sentence for killing a 43-year-old man who had solicited her for sex when she was 16 years old. She was granted clemency earlier this year.

Bowen—who worked as deputy campaign manager for Rahm Emanuel in 2011, has managed City Council and Senate campaigns, and worked on Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign—said that running for mayor of Chicago is more like a presidential campaign, with TV and radio stations and major newspapers putting a microscope to candidates. Preckwinkle positioned herself as a progressive working outside of the political machine. Yet the truth is more complex, and her campaign did not seem to be ready for the intense scrutiny that comes with an election, including allegations of “inappropriate behavior” against her former chief of staff. Preckwinkle has faced scrutiny for being the “Boss,” someone who is a part of and has benefited from Chicago’s giant, often corrupt Democratic apparatus.

Christopher Z. Mooney, a political science professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, said that Preckwinkle’s position in local government in Chicago is a double-edged sword. It is job experience and has earned her a level of renown, but “the downside is [her job presents] a great opportunity to piss off people,” he said.

“You’re also going to probably bump up against some situations that you don’t necessarily want your mom to know about,” he con-

tinued. “Not necessarily that they’re illegal, but sometimes they’re unseemly.”

Enter 14th Ward alderman Ed Burke. He threw a fund-raiser for Preckwinkle at his home in Gage Park on January 19, 2018. Then federal officers raided his offices on November 29, 2018, and charged him with attempted extortion. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Burke illegally solicited a \$10,000 campaign donation from a restaurant executive for another politician, reportedly Preckwinkle.

Preckwinkle explained that while her campaign did receive the money, she returned the funds to the donor because it exceeded the state’s donation limit, which is \$5,600 from an individual. In a public statement made earlier this year, Preckwinkle said she was “appalled by Alderman Ed Burke’s apparent abuse of his position for personal gain” and stated that she would give back the \$116,000 she raised at Burke’s house in 2018.

“I won’t have my name dragged through the mud over the alleged criminal conduct of Susana Mendoza’s mentor, Gery Chico’s best friend, and Bill Daley’s longtime political ally,” she wrote in the statement, referring to Burke and throwing her mayoral contenders under the bus. “Cynics says that corruption and Chicago politics go together. I have never accepted that. I have spent my career taking on the good old boys’ club.”

Earlier this month, it was reported that Preckwinkle’s administration hired Burke’s son, Ed Burke Jr., for a county job that gave him a six-figure salary. Then it was revealed that Burke’s son was under investigation for sexual misconduct in the Cook County Sheriff’s Office at the time he was hired. Preckwinkle admit-

ted to speaking to Burke about a job opportunity for his son and, in a press conference, said she only “had one or two meetings a year with Alderman Burke out of a thousand meetings.”

“It’s getting more complicated to show enough distance with Burke,” said Dick Simpson, professor of political science at UIC and former alderman of the 44th Ward. “Even if [Preckwinkle] did return some of the money raised at the fund-raiser.” (Simpson has endorsed and donated to the Lori Lightfoot campaign.)

Bowen said that there are a handful of nimble candidates out there ready to attack the presumptive front-runner at any chance, especially when she’s tried to knock them off the ballot. Last week at a mayoral forum at the Union League Club, Lightfoot accused Preckwinkle of being a boss behind a “corrupt organization that squelches innovation—doesn’t allow for independents to ever have a voice.” Preckwinkle replied that she was the most progressive candidate running.

“Preckwinkle and Mendoza have been losing ground on the public opinion polls,” Simpson explains. “It is too early to tell whether they will recover. But they have been hurt by the story of Burke.”

Betty O’Shaughnessy, a former political science lecturer and coauthor of *Winning Elections in the 21st Century* with Simpson, said that the scandals around Preckwinkle and Mendoza look ugly. “It depends on how they handle all of this in the next week or two. Because what you’re going to see is the other top candidates are going to be jumping on it.”

Bowen said that while the mayoral race is nonpartisan, it functions more like a Democratic primary because most of the voters are Democrats. “The hardest thing to do is to run essentially against people of your own party in a multicandidate primary,” he said. “Voters really do well when there’s a distinction between candidates, Democrats or Republicans. Voters need that signal to sort out where they should be.”

Some experts thought Preckwinkle was a sure thing after she entered the mayoral race in September 2018 after Rahm Emanuel announced that he wouldn’t be running for reelection. If the polls can say anything with confidence, however, it’s that some 25 percent of the electorate is still undecided. **R**

Additional reporting by Sujay Kumar

@ sammie_smylie

MAYORAL Q&A

Toni Preckwinkle

IN EARLY DECEMBER, Ben Joravsky interviewed mayoral candidate Toni Preckwinkle. Now chair of the Cook County Democratic Party, and president of the Cook County Board since 2010, she withstood the overturn of her soda tax to win reelection in 2014. Prior to her election to the board she was the longtime alderman of the Fourth Ward, and prior to that a CPS history teacher. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

JORAVSKY: I was very intrigued by your call for a ban on the creation of new charter schools. In the past you've been supportive of some charters. Is this an indication that in your mind we went too far under Mayor Rahm and Mayor Daley by creating too many charters?

PRECKWINKLE: We want to provide quality education for all of our kids. When I was alderman—and I was alderman for almost 20 years—when people were thinking about moving into the ward they came to me and they said, we have two questions: Are the schools good and are the streets safe? So if we're going to build a strong city, we have to have strong neighborhoods and schools that are community anchors, and we have to make them high quality in all of our neighborhoods.

And about the ban on closing more schools in the next four years, can we afford that, first of all, and why do you think that's necessary?

When you close a school it's not just closing a school, it's withdrawing a community anchor. It's not just the education that's withdrawn—it's a very public way of disinvesting in a community, especially if, after four or five years, the school is still vacant, boarded up, abandoned, an eyesore, and a blight in your community.

When you look back at Rahm's decision to close those schools, do you think it has a connection to the drop-off in population Chicago has suffered in the black wards?

I don't know what to attribute the population loss to—I think that's something that bears further research. But you know, Mayor Emanuel came in basically disparaging teachers. I think there was a contract [that] was about to be up and he talked about how all the teachers cared about was money. Well, I was a teacher for a decade. I never met anybody who went into teaching for the money. I'm sorry, but people who go into teaching love kids, love their subject matter. Nobody's motivated by the money to go into education. To close 50 [schools] and not have the infrastructure in place to see that those transitions go well, I think was a terrible mistake, and I said so at the time. That's my tribe—I am a teacher.

Of course, the other great plank on your platform is kicking more of the TIF surplus to the Chicago Public Schools. Explain to folks exactly what you're talking about with that issue.

TIFs have been used way beyond the initial way in which the program was envisioned—that is, catalyzing development in struggling neighborhoods. My state representative, majority leader Barbara Flynn Currie, has a measure in the hopper that would say that all declared TIF surpluses in Chicago would go to the Chicago Public Schools. They are the taxing body that suffers the greatest losses as a result of the sequestering of funds in TIF districts.

Mayor Rahm, as he's heading out of office, has a proposal for a new TIF district on the north side of Chicago, the Lincoln Yards TIF district. It could bring in \$800 million to a billion. He's trying to rush it through before he leaves, during the lame-duck session. Are you willing to stand up and oppose that TIF district, at least until you become mayor and can review it?

Let me say this, I think any development of that magnitude and proposing that you put it all into a TIF district raises questions in my mind. I know this is in Brian Hopkins's ward, and I will tell you the truth, I haven't talked to Brian Hopkins about it. So I don't want to be in a position where I haven't even talked to the local alderman about a development and then take a position on it. But it's troubling

to me that this site would be the subject of tremendous TIF support. The question is whether you could do development there without the TIF and preserve those property taxes for the taxing bodies, particularly our public schools.

Bill Daley came out with a commercial saying he would have a moratorium on property tax hikes. Do you favor such a moratorium?

Well, here's the challenge. The city of Chicago is not the only entity which relies on property taxes. Public schools do, the county does, and it's hard to see how the mayor can pledge that your property taxes are not going to be increased if there are all kinds of other taxing bodies that have the same power to increase your property taxes. Property taxes are less regressive than sales taxes and often less regressive than fines and fees which governments also rely on. So I would hesitate to say I'm not going to raise property taxes, although I think that the first thing you have to do when you go into the mayor's office is look at operations and figure out how we can be more efficient, how we can be more effective, how we can use our tax dollars better.

The feds came knocking on Alderman Ed Burke's door in late November, going through both his City Hall office and his ward office. He had a fund-raiser a couple days later and a thousand people showed up. Were you one of the people that showed up at the fund-raiser?

No, it was the night in which I had three or four other things.

Would you have shown up if you didn't have three or four other things?

Probably not.

If you are elected mayor of the city of Chicago, are you pledging you're going to have a healthier relationship with the Chicago Teachers Union than Rahm Emanuel did?

Well, I hope to have a good relationship with all of our labor unions. It's really critical that as mayor you have good working relationships with the all the constituencies that make up the city. Of course labor unions have always been an important part of our city fabric, and that's particularly true of the Chicago Teachers Union, and as I said, teachers are my tribe. 

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Sixty-five units of affordable housing are anticipated at this empty plot at the intersection of California and Division.

“We want to preserve this as a space for Puerto Rican families,” says 26th Ward alderman Roberto Maldonado (right). He supports lifting the ban on rent control. “In order to motivate landlords to go along this path we need to provide incentive to upkeep property. A board should be established that would be comprised of people that know the neighborhood.”



Since large corporate retailers have moved into Wicker Park, it's become unrealistic for smaller local businesses to keep up with escalating rents.

“Don’t push us out”

The First and 26th Wards will vote on a nonbinding referendum that asks whether Illinois should lift the ban on rent control—prohibited in the state since 1997.

Story and photos by KATHLEEN HINKEL



A crowd gathers at a press conference to announce initiatives to lift the ban on rent control. “We’re not saying we don’t want people to come into our community,” says Rod Wilson, 45, the executive director of the Lugenia Burns Hope Center. “We’re saying don’t push us out.”



“How can we heal the damage of gentrification?” asks Norma Rios-Sierra (left and above), 38, a homeowner working with the Logan Square Neighborhood Association to develop low-income housing initiatives. “I want people to have an option to live here.” She says her family receives “one mailing per week that is some amazing sales pitch to sell their property.”



Hajiya Adamu, 61, works as a caretaker and lives in the 50th Ward. As rents have increased, Adamu has appreciated having a landlord who is reasonable and has allowed her to find roommates as needed to keep up with her rent. She says more roommates still mean a higher water bill, and likely higher rent.



Casey Sweeney, 27, left, and India Peek-Jensen, 26, of Grassroots Illinois Action go door to door in Humboldt Park. The organization led the initiative to place lifting the ban on rent control on the ballot.



Cherie Travis stands outside of one of her properties near Logan Square. She's against lifting the ban on rent control. "It is already a treacherous place for small landlords in Chicago," she says. "[Rent control] creates a massive disincentive for landlords to keep up the property."



A man walks along North Homan in the 26th Ward, where certain precincts will be voting on the nonbinding referendum to lift the ban on rent control.

Bloomingdale Avenue, in the 26th Ward, runs parallel to the 606 trail. Critics say the 606 has contributed to the disappearance of affordable housing in the neighborhood, accelerating gentrification and displacing minority families who have traditionally called these wards home.



Ramon Vasquez (far left), 41, owns Humboldt Cuts in one of the precincts of the First Ward that will be voting on the rent-control referendum. His colleagues and customers say the makeup of the neighborhood has changed drastically as gentrification has set in. He notes that the extra business has been nice.

A newer development on Armitage in the First Ward advertises itself with the slogan "Logan Square Redefined." The building's units start at \$1,995 per month for 960 square feet.



Choco-spice; ham roll ALEXANDER GOULETAS

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Irving Park's Finom is a good place for a latte, a lecsó sandwich, and a nap

It's Hungarian food and almond milk-hibiscus tea lattes.

By **MIKE SULA**

After the woman had finished her lecsó sandwich, cherry turnover, and choco-spice latte, she asked if she could take a nap on the couch.

At first Rafael Galarza thought she was joking. “So I said, ‘Yeah,’ and she proceeded to take her shoes off, kick her feet up, and knock out for like an hour and a half,” says the chef and co-owner of Finom Coffee.

Finom inhabits a 130-year-old two-story frame building, and its old-timey wood-clad interior feels like a comfortable refuge from the car-swept, pigeon-stained commotion surrounding the confluence of Irving Park Road, the Kennedy, and the Blue Line and Metra stops just outside its doors.

Or it could be that the sandwich did her in. That's a custardy pile of buttery eggs, soft scrambled with a vegetable-and-sausage ragout, slices of smoky butterkase cheese, and a smear of absinthe-spiked mustard, all swaddled in a buttery croissant from Edgewater's Phlour Bakery.

Lecsó, a paprika-stained Hungarian stew of lard-sauteed peppers and tomatoes, doesn't typically appear on a sandwich. But it is typically consumed with bread, as it is with Finom's slightly more traditional expression of it, served in a mini Le Creuset crock, crowned with a sel gris-sprinkled sunny-side up egg. Galarza supplements the erstwhile kick provided by hard-to-find gypsy peppers with a dose of Erős Pista (“Strong Steve”) Hungarian pepper paste.

Galarza, who's worked at Kimski, Momotaro, Yusho, and A10, isn't Hungarian, and neither is his partner, Daniel Speer, a former corporate chef for Nordstrom's—but Speer's wife is. When the two friends were trying to decide what kind of food to serve in their coffee shop, they wanted to find something people couldn't get anywhere nearby.

Galarza knew nothing about Hungarian food, but that didn't faze him. The flavor profiles are nothing most are unfamiliar with. He had a more primary concern. “Coffee-shop food sucks,” he says. “And it sucks to me that people are OK with really shitty food. You paid \$7 for a shitty sandwich? It's expected. We have to change the way people perceive this food.”

But if you have any familiarity with Hungarian food, Galarza might change those perceptions too. Fans of the late, great Paprikash shouldn't expect the generous, meaty gut-busting platters that spot trafficked in.

OK, the goulash (in Hungarian it's *gulyásleves*) is pretty straightforward, an example of what Galarza means when he says the name of the dish is the only thing that might seem unfamiliar. It's a warming, unleaded beef stew (built on meat from the underappreciated knuckle bone) with parsnips, carrots, and onions; a defense against the Chiberian punishment we're grappling with.

The deceptively titled marrow toast, on the other hand, is a delicate thing of beauty, a smooth composite, not of bone jelly, but ➔

FOOD & DRINK

continued from 13

veal brain (or “head marrow” in Hungary), chicken liver, and smoky bacon, spread thin across toasted sourdough, bedazzled with sliced watermelon radish and pickled tomato, and showered with cured egg yolk and assorted microflora.

Galarza and Speer round out the rest of this concise menu with house-made pickles, curated cheese and charcuterie plates, and Portuguese and Spanish canned seafood conservas. There are pastries from Oak Park’s Spilt Milk, and more from Phlour too, but it’s when Galarza goes rogue with weekly specials that things get particularly interesting. When a friend gave him a case of cactus paddles, he jumped off from the tomato tartare at Momotaro and put together a charred nopale tartare, a constructed puck of meaty cacti amalgamated with pickled tomato, raisins, cauliflower, cucumbers, Erős Pista aioli, absinthe mustard, and sourdough bread crumbs. An aversion to working with poultry led to mushroom paprikash (versus the standard chicken), its sauce boosted with mushroom dashi and puree and



dressed with wild porcini powder and spherified truffle “caviar.” Another time he took *körözött*, the ubiquitous farmer-cheese table spread and gussied it up with an artful perimeter of paprika, mizuna, bread crumbs, edible flowers, and egg-yolk jam.

With limited space and equipment, Galarza is nonetheless willing to play dealer’s choice with whatever he has on hand. “I’m cooking with no hood, an induction burner, a soup warmer, and residual heat from a toaster oven,” he says. But “I will 100 percent freestyle it.”

Search the Reader’s online database of thousands of Chicago-area restaurants—and add your own review—at chicagoreader.com/food.



Charcuterie plates  ALEXANDER GOULETAS

Coffee and tea are provided by Counter Culture Coffee and Rare Tea Cellars, respectively, and appear with help from barista Ari Franco in specialty lattes such as the aforementioned choco spice, a Ibarra chocolate latte dusted with paprika and crumbled Abuelita chocolate cookies; a Turkish delight latte with rosewater and candied rose petals; and a sunrise in a coffee cup: the Hawaiian Fog, an almond-milk-and-hibiscus-tea latte dusted with dried cherry powder and turmeric.

Finom, on a smaller scale, is in league with the likes of Humboldt’s Park’s Café Marie Jeanne and Washington Park’s late Currency Exchange Café, those rare community spaces where the food is no afterthought to the caffeine or the comfortable surroundings. 

 @MikeSula

Melville Finding America at Sea

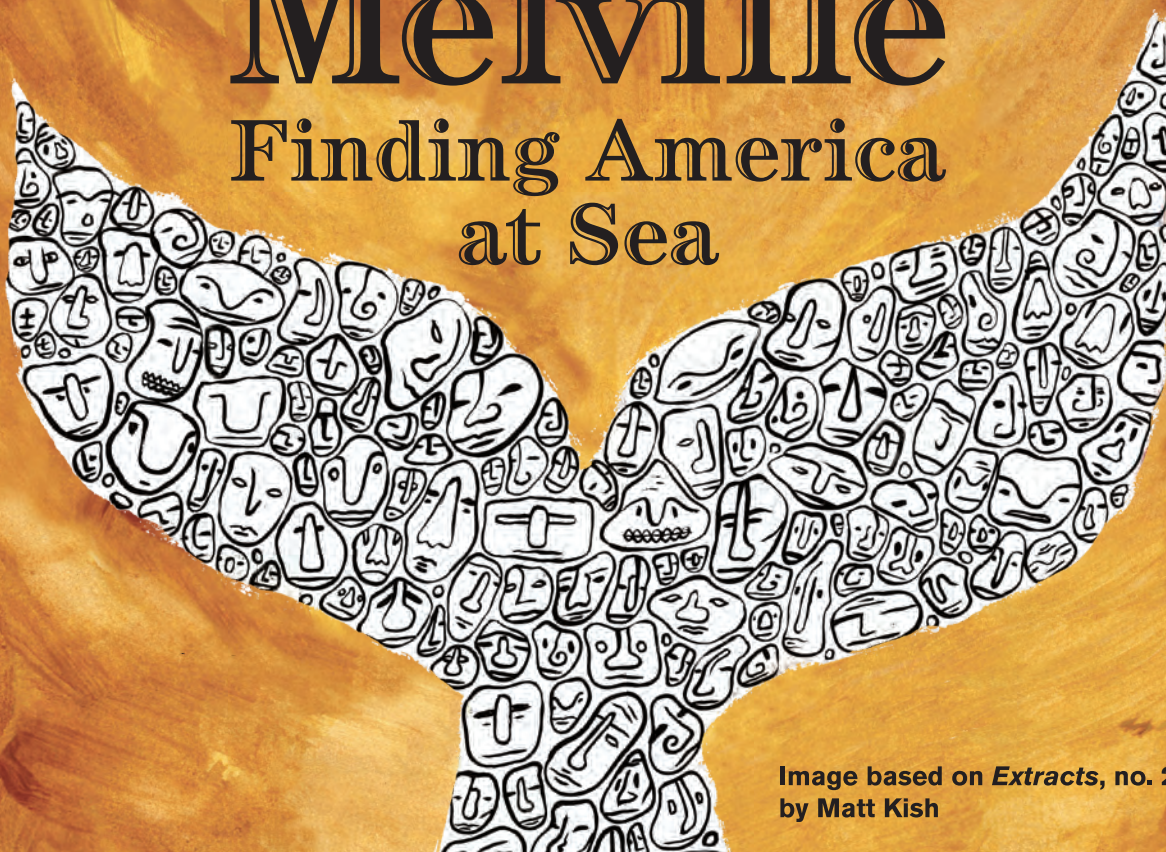


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Beyond the “woman slot”

Four Chicago directors discuss the challenges of leading a theater production while female.

By **NOVID PARSI**

Sadly, I’m the 100th white guy standing up here tonight,” remarked Nick Bowling at the Jeff Awards ceremony last October as he accepted his trophy for best director of a musical. Then he pointed to his corecipient, **LILI-ANNE BROWN**, and said, “It’s time to change, and this is where it starts, right here.” The audience responded with the night’s only standing ovation.

Bowling’s comments spoke to more than the demographics of that one coterie of award winners. Theater directors in the United States are predominantly men, and Chicago theater is no exception. Just over a third of Chicago plays during the 2015-’16 season were directed by women, according to a 2017 study.

Yet Brown is not the only harbinger of change. She belongs to a group of emerging women theater directors in Chicago whose careers have been taking off. For years, they’ve been an invaluable part of the city’s storefront theater scene. More recently, and in the upcoming months, they’re directing plays on some of the city’s most prominent stages.

VANESSA STALLING, an ensemble member at the House Theatre of Chicago, has helmed *Photograph 51*, currently playing at Court Theatre. **KEIRA FROMM** is an ensemble member at About Face Theatre, which is currently running her production of *Dada Woof Papa Hot*. **MARTI LYONS**, an ensemble member at the Gift Theatre and an artistic associate at Sideshow Theatre Company, will direct Lauren Yee’s *Cambodian Rock Band* at Victory Gardens in April. And Brown will direct *Lottery Day* by red-hot local playwright Ike Holter at the Goodman Theatre in March.

Recently, these four freelance directors—and friends, judging from their easy laughter and off-the-record banter—sat down at Chez Moi, a French restaurant in Lincoln Park. While sipping water and coffee, they chatted about Chicago theater, the progress it’s made, and the progress it’s yet to achieve.

This conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Do you think opportunities for women theater directors in Chicago have gotten better or worse during your careers so far?

LILI-ANNE BROWN: I directed my first show in 2009, and in the last decade the visibility has changed. Everybody’s talking about it.

KEIRA FROMM: The Chicago theater community has emboldened itself to start having conversations that acknowledge the disparity, and that has forced artistic directors to try to make it better. Has that happened? Not completely, but it feels like a slow burn towards getting a little bit better.

What does “better” mean?

MARTI LYONS: To me it means closer to parity. And now I think the conversation’s beyond that, because we’re really talking about more than just a gender binary or gender parity. We’re talking about representation.

VANESSA STALLING: Chicago is having a very active conversation about whose voices are part of the theater, and as we move forward, we start to see more and more who is left behind or left out. But we hold one another accountable as much as we hold one another up. I feel like that is unique to Chicago.

Despite the active conversation, just over a third of plays in Chicago are directed by women—what do you make of that?

STALLING: Even if we four directors see each other’s social media posts and we know we’re working, we might be in a bit of a bubble compared to what really is happening. The data doesn’t lie.

FROMM: There’s still a need for women in major artistic administrative roles in theaters. Primarily men still curate seasons, so those projects are geared more toward men. But because our community is having this conversation, theaters acknowledge that, yes, they have primarily male directors and male playwrights and they have to do better. Everyone wants to feel like they’re moving towards parity and not leaving communities behind, so the intention is good. What often happens is, to check a box, a theater approaches one of us and says, “Hey, I have this project that I need a director for”—versus seeking us out ahead of that process to ask, “What stories are compelling to you?” Theaters need to invite women’s voices into the curating process, not at the end when they recognize they have to fulfill some criteria.

BROWN: That’s something that happens when you’re any kind of special demographic—in other words, not white cis male. For the- ➔

continued from 15

aters that have been doing it the same way for 20 to 30 years, it's normal for them to be like, "I want this guy, this guy, this guy—these are my homies and I'm gonna ask them what shows they want to do—oh, shoot, we need a woman slot. OK, let's get a woman slot. Let's see, who are the women directors? Great, what woman play do you want to do?" And you're like, "What?" Last week I did a pitch meeting where I got asked about everything I wanted to do, and I thought, oh, this is so exciting, and then they came back and said, "We love all of your ideas but we have a slot for a female playwright, and we want it to have a small cast and be very joyous and celebratory because there's so much dark stuff going on." I'm like, well, that's not anything I pitched.

STALLING: What's really important is how we are moving out of default. For so long, the default way of programming a season was a bunch of white men and white male playwrights talking about white male stories. So there has been progress. My father was a behavioral psychologist, and he was like, in order to change behavior and literally reprogram your neurons, you have to change physically what you're doing in practice. Then that will help change all those default settings. So we're in a period of adjusting the default.

You all were nodding when the conversation turned to "the woman slot." Have the rest of you experienced that, too?

LYONS: Certainly. But checking the box is actually a great first step. It might feel unnatural for a while for a theater to override its instinct, and that unnatural feeling is OK. That's where we start. But for me, I really feel that checked box when I'm in a situation where I realize the theater wanted someone who's going to operate the way a racist hetero white male was going to, but they needed to fill this slot. I'm like, oh, you wanted someone who looked like me but you didn't actually want to invite my entire artistic being or perspective into this experience. That's when it hits me hardest. So theaters need to make space not just for the right numbers but for people's different lived experiences and make work from those experiences.

Female directors have said they get questioned or challenged more than male directors do in rehearsal rooms and production meetings. Do you all experience that?

BROWN: I haven't had a whole lot of that in



© MICHELLE KANAAR

the theater yet because I've been doing storefront theater, so I've been in charge. [Laughs.] Also, when I first started freelancing, the only people who hired me were women. I couldn't get hired by men, so they couldn't treat me weird. I remember one interview process where I literally had so much more experience than two friends who were both men, and they both got hired and I didn't. I'm also moving through the world with black skin, so sometimes I don't know which thing is happening, to be honest.

LYONS: Directing is such an isolated experience that it can be very difficult to tell what is systemic and what is just you. We're not in each other's rehearsal rooms or interviews. Early on in my career, there's so much I was doing just to survive in this career. For me there was a bit of requisite tunnel vision and also a lot of internalizing of things that maybe weren't about me, which is also maybe gendered. I'm only in a place now where I'm able to have enough perspective on things that may have been at play and there are times when I think, oh, this feels really gendered.

STALLING: It's hard to know if someone is seeing a woman, because I just see myself. It was not until a couple of years ago when we started having these conversations in the public sphere that I thought maybe such and such is happening because I'm a woman. I thought I had to operate a certain way and that I was lacking something and that I was supposed to be stronger or more aggressive. There was a moment when I directed through my male assistant director—isn't that sad? I thought, OK, I'll send my direction through him because I think it will land differently, I think it might be heard. I've had other instances where a male artistic director could literally repeat what I just said and it would be heard differently—all the time. They're brief

moments that were large enough to make me aware of my gender in that moment.

LYONS: I've had that, and with designers also. I've had instances where I said to a male designer, "Can you bring this up in the production meeting?" Because then I know we'll get it, or at least it will be heard differently than if I ask for it.

FROMM: It's tricky because as artists and as theater makers we need to be good collaborators. I'm constantly feeling torn between deference, subservience, and collaboration. There's a pitfall there, which is that I am not the dominant voice in the room, and suddenly I become aware my voice is actually not being heard in this moment. Then it's a game around: Is the designer going to take up this issue? Maybe then it'll get better traction. Or maybe an artistic director echoes something I've already said. That absolutely happens.

STALLING: I've been lucky to have been a significant part of crafting who's in the room with me and who's part of that process, and that's huge. I do not consider myself an auteur director where I'm at the top of a hierarchy and everyone else is doing what I say—that's actually really boring for me and not fun at all and there's zero room for discovery in rooms like that. I work better when I know I have collaborators that are going to inspire me. Am I being naive? Or is this not something that I have had to deal with on a moment-by-moment basis—recognizing I'm a woman now, I'm a woman now, I'm a woman now?

FROMM: I've found that artistic directors can be great advocates if there's a moment of tension in a production meeting. It meant so much to me when the Gift Theatre's Michael Patrick Thornton decided their 2013 season would have female directors. It was Marti, myself, and Erica Weiss. There are a lot of artistic directors who are allies and advocates.

And it's only been in the past couple of years that I've found it's enough to say, "Well, it's my artistic vision that's carrying us through this process." It's been a confidence-building issue.

LYONS: It's interesting. This is not actually a conversation that's comfortable for me—talking about the ways being identified as a woman director has been limiting. That's not a major focus for me in my own internal dialogue because it's not very productive. It may be a conversation I have with my peers and trusted collaborators and artistic directors. I'm just recognizing how careful I feel because there are so many incidents where people have gone above and beyond. It's not that I don't think about gender everyday; I do. But I don't have public conversations about it that will then be in print.

Who've been some of your mentors, and how have they made a difference in your careers?

STALLING: Jim Lasko, the former artistic director of Redmoon, trusted me when I didn't know why he should have. He was a big risk-taker. Deb Alley, who was the artistic director of the Illinois Shakespeare Festival, said, "First and foremost, always assume people are doing the best they can. Everybody wants to do good work." And Robert Falls at the Goodman has such a generous personality; I learned a lot from him.

BROWN: Brad Lyons used to be the artistic director of Timber Lake Playhouse, which is where I got my start. It's in a cornfield in Mount Carroll, Illinois. He was the first person who had conversations with me about what I was trying to do and how I could do it better.

LYONS: The directors Chay Yew, Les Waters, and Kimberly Senior. They encouraged me to trust my own voice and gave me the space and time to develop my skills. The playwright Tanya Saracho gave me my first job in Chicago when I was 22 and nobody knew who I was. She was like, "You do it."

FROMM: The directors Diane Paulus and Kimberly Senior. The best mentors can talk with you about both the art and the job. I just had a conversation with Kimberly yesterday about agents. As directors, we don't make a whole lot of money to warrant giving 10 percent away to agents. It's a little heartbreaking thinking about some of those paychecks. [Laughs.] Kimberly suggested tallying up what I make in a year and then putting 10 percent of that to my own professional development, like flying myself to another city to see its theater.

CURRENT AND UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS:

LILI-ANNE BROWN

THE TOTAL BENT 2/7-3/10: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee, haventheatrechicago.com, \$35.

LOTTERY DAY 3/29-4/28: Wed-Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Goodman Theatre, 170 N Dearborn, 312-443-3800, goodmantheatre.org.

KEIRA FROMM

DADA WOOF PAPA HOT Through 2/16: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont, 773-975-8150, about-facetheatre.com, \$38, \$20 students and seniors.

MARTI LYONS

SHORT SHAKESPEARE! MACBETH 2/16-3/16: Sat 11 AM, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, 800 E. Grand, 312-595-5600, chicagoshakes.com, \$34, \$22 18 and under.

CAMBODIAN ROCK BAND 4/13-5/5: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Victory Gardens Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln, 773-871-3000, victorygardens.org, \$37-\$71.

VANESSA STALLING

PHOTOGRAPH 51 Through 2/17: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat-Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis, 773-753-4472, courttheatre.org, \$50-\$74, \$37.50-\$55.50 students.

What concerns you about Chicago theater right now?

FROMM: Theaters are starting to believe they've done the work and the work is done—without acknowledging that it is a long game that requires patience and they have to involve women in the curating process and throughout the whole season.

STALLING: Small storefront theaters being able to start in the first place. New York doesn't get to have storefront theater anymore, it's just too expensive. I look at the House and Jackalope, and I wonder how they are going to be the next Looking-glass, which was the last company to move into a larger venue and be of the caliber of the Goodman or Steppenwolf. The funding question is real. If there isn't storefront theater, there isn't a process to get those emerging voices access to opportunities so they can move up.

LYONS: I'm really concerned with what's happening to journalism. We're actually partner industries that need freedom of speech and freedom of expression, and that's in crisis in this country right now. And I agree that smaller theaters are really important for upcoming artists who might not otherwise have a chance at all in this industry. Those theaters are the entry-level gatekeepers. If you don't have that, then you don't have the thing on your resumé that even gets you to assistant-direct for one of us.

STALLING: And how are the larger theaters able to take risks when funding is such a massive element and they have to make sure their programming is sustainable?

BROWN: I'm up at night thinking about theater boards. Does the board system even work? Who's on the boards? How do we freshen them up so that they're more representative of our population and they have new ideas about how to get funding? They're the people behind the curtain who determine a theater's tenor and the audience that theater invites in and who's working there. It all starts at the top.

What excites you about Chicago theater?

BROWN: This room. And Chicago playwrights that are really killing the game right now.

STALLING: Chicago playwrights.

LYONS: The innovation that can happen here because there's not a high price for entry.

FROMM: This community wants you to succeed, and that doesn't happen in a lot of theater communities. ■



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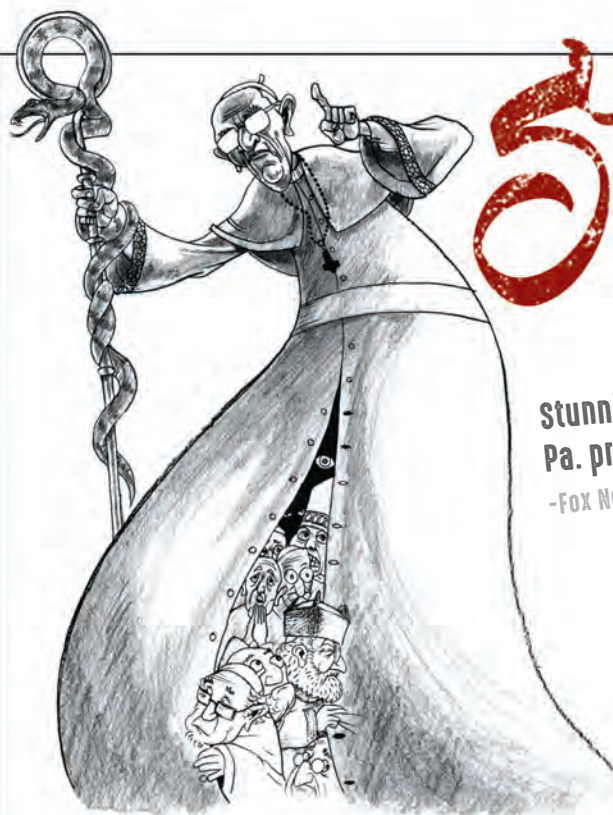
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-NPR, October 19, 2018

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Dan Sheehan (left) and J. Michael Osborne © SARAH LARSON

I wrote this thing that I was convinced was brilliant,” says the comedian J. Michael Osborne, a producer-host of the shame-based storytelling show *We Still Like You*. “It was like, [about] Jesus, but it’s in the modern day, Fox News commentators don’t like him very much, isn’t that interesting? I was sitting in the middle of this party and was like, I have to get this down. Then one of the guys that lived there asked me what I was writing on, and I flipped it over, and it was a newspaper clipping of this old guy, I didn’t know anything about him, and he was like, ‘Oh that’s the last [existing] photograph of my dead dad, and that’s the only copy that I have.’ And then I kept it. I was so convinced my story was so good I had to keep it.”

It’s a story Osborne’s told onstage before, and it’s a favorite of the other producers and hosts of the show. As he casually retells the story to the four others on the team, they’re all laughing so hard they’re gasping for breath, some wiping away tears. The group has reached a level of trust where they can share anything—they know each other’s deepest darkest secrets, and they can laugh about them. Once a month they invite members of the public to join them and share their own shameful secrets at *We Still Like You*.

It began five years ago when Danii Gallegos,

Dan Sheehan, and Tyler Snodgrass were new to Chicago comedy and wanted to start a performance series of their own. At the time, many people in the community were complaining about an oversaturation of comedy showcases. Gallegos, Sheehan, and Snodgrass decided to combine their shared love of storytelling, house shows, and wallowing in shame to create something that stood out from the crowd. The first year they used pizza and beer to bribe audiences to come to their shows in a Buena Park apartment. Now *We Still Like You* is regularly selling out shows at the 50-seat Storefront Theatre in the Flatiron Arts Building in Wicker Park and has offshoots in Denver, Louisville, and LA, where Sheehan now lives. The Chicago team has grown to include host-producers Gallegos, Snodgrass, Osborne, Erin Grotheer, and Jesse Betend, who also produces the eponymous podcast featuring stories from live shows across the country.

“Shame means something different to everyone, and I think our show does a really good job of representing that,” Gallegos says. “It’s building a sense of community on a shared feeling that we’ve all felt, and then also releasing that tension of feeling deeply guilty about the things you’ve done.”

Each show features five or so performers telling embarrassing stories. Each tale is fol-

lowed by a public moment of forgiveness as the crowd shouts, “We still like you!” Afterward, members of the audience can ask questions or pry for further details during a Q&A. And after every performance, there is more often than not a rowdy party, which the producers

WE STILL LIKE YOU FIFTH ANNIVERSARY SHOW
Sat 2/2, 10 PM,
Collaboration Theatre,
1579 N. Milwaukee,
westilllikeyou.com, \$10.

consider a chance for everyone to live out a *We Still Like You* story for a future show. During the four-year anniversary show last February, Snodgrass presented an illustrated slideshow of the most embarrassing moments that have happened over the course of *We Still Like You*.

The producers don’t accept just any story for the show. The submission form includes some guidelines, like “do not humblebrag” and “do not send us stories about pooping/peeing.” The hard-and-fast rule is, performers must feel real shame. Where the story goes from there is anybody’s guess.

“In one of my all-time-favorite moments from the show,” Osborne says, “Cody Melcher

told a story about his grandmother dying and that he felt like he hadn’t connected with her and he had slighted her and ignored her and didn’t get a chance to say all those things. Not a dry eye in the house, just weeping. And then right after him was a story from a guy named Matty Ryan, and the story was about a jellyfish stinging his dick. That moment still to this day encapsulates my favorite thing about the show: It’s a space where both of those things can exist right alongside each other.”

Every show is recorded for a podcast, but all performers are given the option of having their name or the names of anyone else in the story edited out or for the story not to be included at all. The producers are still surprised at what people allow to be broadcast, like the guy who stole a car, crashed it, then set it on fire to destroy the evidence.

“I’m a lawyer during the day,” Grotheer says. “I hear stories sometimes and I’m like, I’m going to take my lawyer hat off for a bit.”

Even after five years of stories, the producers are still shocked by the terrible things that happen to people as well as the terrible things people do.

“There is a great Chicago comedian who’s told a story about how while at church he masturbated to a picture of a girl in a church quarterly magazine who was a victim of the Columbine shooting,” Snodgrass says. “I still can’t believe that one.”

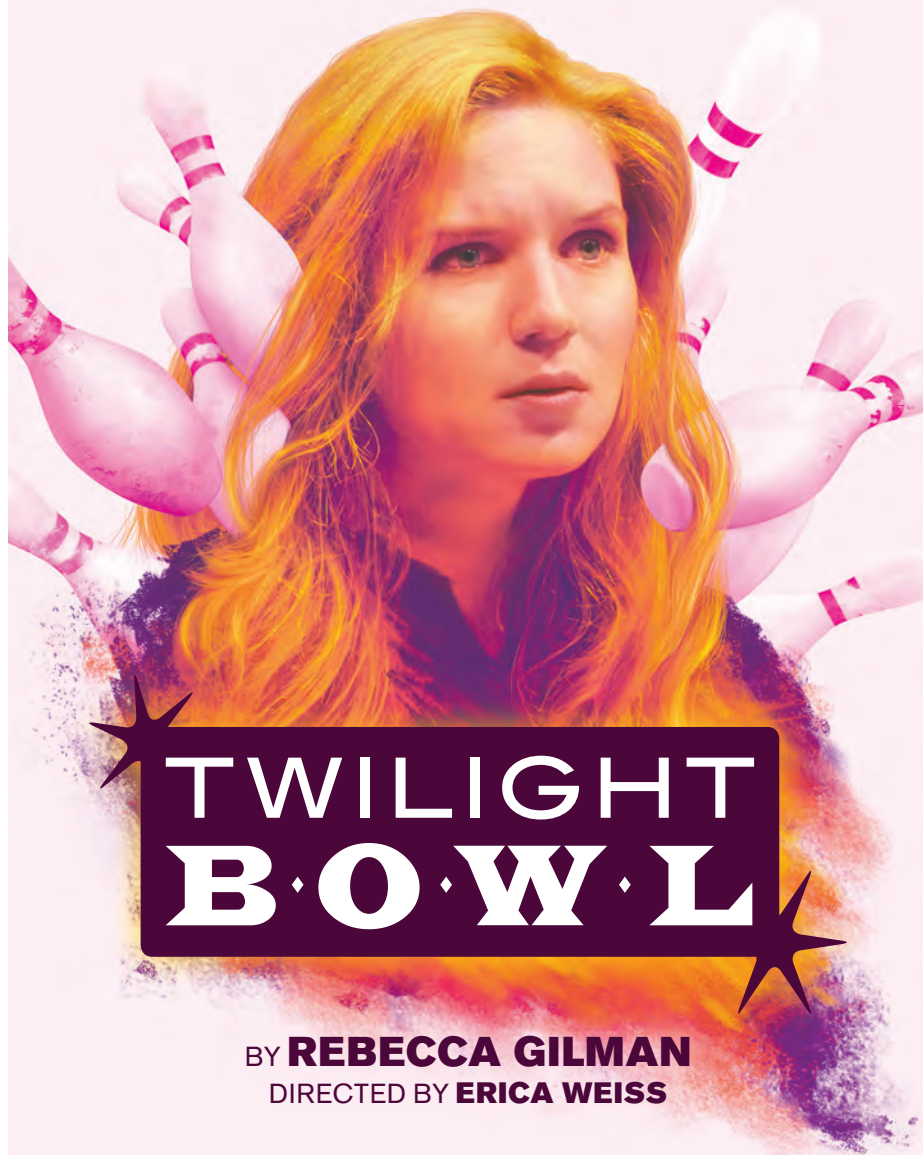
There are plenty of others: The guy who butt dialed 911 during his first make-out session. The white woman who read a story she wrote when she was eight years old from the perspective of a black girl who just doesn’t understand the appeal of Martin Luther King Jr. The drag queen who got blackout drunk and had to break a window to get into her house on Christmas Day—in full Mrs. Claus drag. And the hosts are certainly not immune to feeling shame of their own. They share stories every week. (Most of those don’t end up on the podcast.)

Goals for the future include bringing *We Still Like You* to more cities, both through touring and setting up more permanent chapters, and opening it up to other members of the Chicago performing scene, not just comedians. Anyone who has recently been publicly embarrassed has an open invite.

“We want to get any of the Fyre Fest guys,” Gallegos says, “except Billy McFarland and Ja Rule, because you have to be capable of shame to do the show.” 📺

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ARTS & CULTURE



Red Rex © LEE MILLER

THEATER

The play about a storefront theater playing in a storefront theater

In *Red Rex*, Ike Holter's Chicago Cycle gets meta.

By JACK HELBIG

Ike Holter's *Red Rex*, the sixth in his seven-play Chicago cycle set in the fictional neighborhood of Rightlynd (aka the 51st Ward), is a play at war with itself. On the one hand it wants to entertain: the play is a spot-on send-up of Chicago storefront theaters and the quirky people who make up those ragtag companies. On the other hand, it wants to be a serious play, packed with meaningful observations about life and art. It succeeds on both counts. One of the more bracing aspects of Holter's play is how it bristles with trenchant observations about race and class and the insidious way unconscious racism influences the perceptions of even well-meaning people who believe in their hearts they are not racist.

A lesser play might have been torn apart by this tension between entertainment and edification. A lesser theater company might

have erred on one side or the other. But Holter's play, especially in the current Steep Theatre premiere directed by Jonathan Berry, is, I think, stronger—and more interesting—because of its contradictions.

It helps that Holter knows how to tell a good story, filled with interesting, well-drawn char-

RR RED REX
Through 3/16: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Steep Theatre, 1115 W. Berwyn, 773-649-3186, steeptheatre.com, \$27-\$38.

acters. He's also a very graceful wordsmith with a strong ear for dialogue and dialect.

He has shown us this side of his craft before. In *The Wolf at the End of the Block* (2017) Holter slides from a dizzying slam-poet style in which

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A Shul In Wilmette	Andrew Dost	Anthony Illarde	Barry Owen	Brenda Fischer	Bruce Sewick	Chris Schaerli
Aaron Cohen	Andrew Edmonds	Anthony Sacco	Barry Stern	Brenda J Minor	Bryan Gleason	Chris Sergio
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Aine Dougherty	Andy and Sandy Levitt	Arthur Mitchell	Beth Fisher	Brian Elmore	Carlyn So	Christopher Elmore
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THANK YOU.

On these four pages of this week's *Chicago Reader*, we give thanks to the more than 2,400 people and businesses who contributed to our first fund-raising drive. Hundreds of others contributed anonymously, and we thank them as well.

This campaign raised more than \$100,000 for the relaunch of the *Chicago Reader*, a newspaper founded in 1971. The *Reader* became independently owned and operated again October 1, 2018, and we could not be more happy with the support this campaign showed us. Whether it was individuals who mailed in \$1 money orders, others who came into the office with \$5, or someone who generously donated \$4,800, every single buck made a difference. Every contribution has motivated us.

We want to save the *Reader* one reader at a time. We pledge to do our very best in every aspect of this work, from the editorial, art,

photographic, and digital departments to sales, events, and circulation. We are Chicago proud, and this city—you—are the reason we are able to do this work.

Those who gave \$48 or more are now founders of the new *Reader*. We will be reaching out to you about what this means soon (although it does include a special founder's pin). We will still be taking founder sign-ups through the end of March, and donations are always welcome. See www.chicagoreader.com/membership.

Finally, a thank-you to the team of Do Big Things, who assisted in this relaunch campaign. They were fabulous to work with. If we have inadvertently left your name off this list, please contact snlane@chicagoreadercorp.com. We will print any additional names in next week's edition.

— TRACY BAIM, PUBLISHER

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Paul Schumann	Rita Alvarez	Samuel Bell	Sharada Chidambaram	Susan Glazer	Tim Sallinger	William Bullion
Paul Williams	Rita Crowley	Samuel Hodgson	Sharif Hussein	Susan Henking and Betty	Timothy Makowski	William Burt
Paulius Elvikis	Rob Hornstra	Samuel McMorris	Sharmili Majmudar	Bayer	Timothy Mennel	William Conley
Pawel Kubiak	Rob Poe	Samuel Osborne	Sharon Feehan	Susan Hill	Timothy Nowack	William Cotter
Peggy Shinner	Robbie Q. Telfer, Inc.	Samuel Pappas	Sharon Mylrea	Susan McBride	Timothy Spitsberg	William Healy
Peggy Trostel	Robert and Wendy Foley	Samuel Zelitch	Sharon Robinson	Susan Tyksinski	Tisha Brannon	William J Scanlon
Percy Hatcherson	Robert Basanich	Sana Kavar	Sharyne M Tu	Susanna Hostetter	Toby Fallsgraff	William Kalb
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Peter Cole	Robert Drew	Donaldson	Shawn Hopman	Suzanne Daley	Tom Carbone	William Malloy
Peter Damm	Robert Evers	Sandra Inc	Shawn Mangan	Suzanne Kelly	Tom Carbone	William Meinen
Peter Dinschel	Robert Fioretti	Sandra Klein	Shawn Neely	Suzanne Vestuto	Tom Lowery	William Molloy
Peter Kohn	Robert Flynn	Sandra R Stone	Sheila Brady	Sweet Purrfection, LLC	Tom Naughton	William Nunnally
Peter O'Malley	Robert Fraser	Sandra Shifrin	Shelby Devitt	Sylvia French	Tom Pace	William Nunnally
Peter Richards	Robert Gillies	Sandra Stone	Shelby Rodeffer	T. Lisa Adams	Tom Roos	William Porter
Peter Roccaforte	Robert Hogan	Santina Croniser	Shelley Howard	Tali Faris-Hylen	Tom Spinella	William R Kloud
Peter Schuster	Robert Jensen	Sapere Group Holdings, Inc.	Sher Dionisio	Tamara Jaffe-Notier	Tom Stothoff	William Savage
Peter Shearn	Robert Kastigar	Sara Brown	Sherry Rasmussen	Tamara Matthews	Toni Armstrong Jr	William Thimes
Peter Toalson	Robert Klaweger	Sara Chapman	Shinji Kuwayama	Tami Zorge	Tonika Johnson	Won Kim
Peter Valicenti	Robert Lawson	Sara Doran	Shirley Thistle	Tanner Howard	Tony Bonyata	Xavier d'Ouille
Petra Slinkard	Robert McDonald	Sara Sevigny	SHOUT Marketing & Media	Tanveer Ali	Tony Nuccio	Yakov Pekar
Phaedra Leslie	Robert Palmer	Sara Thobe	Relations	Tania Sebastian	Tony Peregrin	Yana Kunichoff
Phil Huckelberry	Robert Schaefer	Sarah and Charles Orlove	Sid Branca	Tanner Howard	Torrence Gardner	Yvonne Sopala
Phil Ladner	Robert Sims	Sarah Bornstein	Sidney Cristol	Tanveer Ali	Tracy Baim	Zachariah Mortice Lowman
Philip Crawford	Robert Stanley	Sarah Buck	Simon's Secondhand	Taofikat Alaka	Tracy Johnson	Zachary Long
Philip Garofalo	Robert Strickland	Sarah Campbell	Siri Chilukuri	Tapojyoti Banerjee	Tracy Lytwyn	Zarik Khan
Philip Grinstead	Roberta Scheff	Sarah Collins	Sladjana Vuckovic	Taylor Gendel	Travis Travis	Zelda G Rideaux
				Taylor Glascock	Travis Truitt	Zobeida J Soto

continued from page 20

characters deliver street-smart, word-drunk monologues to naturalistic dialogue that could have been lifted straight from transcripts of everyday conversations. But this time he has gone meta. *Red Rex* is a play about a storefront theater in a gentrifying south-side neighborhood putting on a play with a strong social message playing in a storefront theater in a gentrifying north-side neighborhood (Edgewater). Oh, and *Red Rex* is a play steeped in social justice issues.

Usually there's a touch of narcissism to this kind of meta theater, like the gentle self-criticism of a play (like *Noises Off* or *The Play That Goes Wrong*) that slaps wrists and then forgives everyone at the end—oh, aren't we a funny, quirky lot! In *Red Rex*, Holter isn't going to let anyone off the hook.

Holter loves to poke sacred cows. (It's one of his most endearing qualities as a comic writer.) Repeatedly he reveals the racist assumptions made by his well-meaning white theater makers. Lana, the white director-playwright at the center of the story, for example, appropriates the tragic story of a local woman, the victim of police brutality, without thinking of asking permission from the living members of her family—or even contacting them.

As it happens, Trevor, the woman's son, still lives in the neighborhood. His confrontation with the executive director of the Red Rex theater over the appropriation of his mother's story is one of the most powerful moments in the play: "You stole some shit from me. From my family. Our history. I think you took my life from my life and I think you're trying to pass it off like it's some shit you just came up with.

... That is my life, it belongs to me. You give it back. You give it back." To this, the executive director has no response. Later he and other members of the theater can't even remember his name. They keep calling him Trayvon (after Trayvon Martin, another sly dig).

At another point in the story someone observes the critics will all write great reviews of Lana's play—which, frankly, looks and sounds like a mess—because they're afraid of being labelled racist if they don't. And, indeed, once the play opens it does receive glowing reviews and becomes a hit.

It takes guts to write a play that pokes at the still mostly white Chicago theater audience (and critics) this way. But that's another of Holter's strengths. He's a terrific provocateur.

He has found a good company for his work at Steep Theatre. Every aspect of the production is flawless. Holter's story unfolds at just the right pace, and Berry's ensemble perfectly embodies its characters. Amanda Powell's performance is a revelation: as the manipulative, emotionally damaged director-playwright Lana she slithers through the play, slowly revealing the racism lurking beneath her shallow white liberal platitudes. Likewise, Debo Balogun is riveting as Trevor, an intense young man trying to preserve the memory of his senselessly murdered mother.

Holter and the folks at Steep Theatre have achieved something great here: a play that both entertains and edifies. It unflinchingly dares to tackle serious issues and serious ideas, but it never leaves the audience wanting less. 

 @JackHelbig

Red Rex  LEE MILLER



All Childish Things  TOM MCGRATH

THEATER

RR In a galaxy not so far away. . .
All Childish Things is a delightful mashup of *Star Wars* and *Ocean's 11*.

You don't have to be a *Star Wars* fanatic to like Joe Zettlemailer's 2006 heist comedy about a group of twentysomething fanboys (and one fangirl) who plan to steal a fortune in mint-condition *Star Wars* action figures. But it doesn't hurt if you know a fanboy or two IRL, the better to appreciate how well Zettlemailer's script captures the aggressive geekiness of these twenty- and early thirtysomethings who know everything there is to know about the *Star Wars* universe but can barely navigate this one. (Zettlemailer comes by this knowledge naturally; he is an honorary member of the 501st Legion, an international *Star Wars* cosplay club.)

Zettlemailer's carefully structured play follows the basic pattern of the heist genre. First we meet the gang—each member quirky in his or her own way, with

a special skill to bring to the table—led by a nerdy ringleader (ably played by Eric Eilersen) who still lives at home with his mom. Then we hear in exquisite detail their well-laid plans for penetrating a Kenner warehouse and stealing a fortune in *Star Wars* booty. The second act is the heist itself and its aftermath.

It's a measure of Zettlemailer's skill as a playwright that *All Childish Things* never feels formulaic even when it adheres most closely to the formula of the genre. Director Melanie Keller and her cast and crew at First Folio also deserve their share of praise. In their hands, the production unfolds with the grace of a well-maintained droid. —**JACK HELBIG** *ALL CHILDISH THINGS* Through 2/24: Wed 8 PM, Thu 3 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, First Folio Theatre, 1717 W. 31st St., Oak Brook, 630-986-8067, firstfolio.org, \$34-\$44, \$29-\$39 students and seniors.

Wages of sin

The suffering of *In the Blood's* heroine serves no higher purpose.

Red Tape Theatre presents Suzan-Lori Parks's 1999 Pulitzer-nominated riff on Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. In Parks's version, Hester (Jyreika Guest) lives in a lean-to under a graffitied highway overpass with her five fatherless children, scrounging for scraps to survive while appealing to anyone who will listen to help her find a way out of her situation.

Every authority figure in Hester's life—the doctor, the welfare worker, the preacher, and the father of 

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ARTS & CULTURE

➡ her firstborn—abuses her in some way. Hester is presented as a cross between Job and Mary Magdalene, suffering and bearing the sins of others presumably for some higher purpose. But to me, no such purpose ever presented itself; instead, what I saw was a wretched person tortured and tormented for two hours until she snaps and lashes out in a murderous rage.

Speaking of snaps, I heard a bunch of the slam-poetry variety from the audience at dramatic moments in the play. The gesture is a mark of approval, an endorsement of what they were hearing and seeing. Maybe I missed something or this work wasn't meant for me, but I heard no music in Parks's words, nor any resonance in this story. Watching an illiterate homeless woman being called a slut by everyone in her life, then being driven to kill may have been meant to be a condemnation of an uncaring world, but it comes off as wallowing in misery to no discernible end. Chika Ike directed. —**DMITRY SAMAROV** *IN THE BLOOD* Through 2/23: Fri-Sat 8 PM, Sun 7 PM, Mon 8 PM, the Ready, 4546 N. Western, redtapetheatre.org. **FREE**

RR Scientific hazards

Rosalind Franklin tells her story in *Photograph 51*.

Chemist and X-ray crystallographer Rosalind Franklin's crucial contributions to discovering the double helix in DNA were largely uncredited during her too-short life. (She died of ovarian cancer—possibly caused by exposure to radiation in her work—at age 37.) Anna Ziegler's drama is a sturdy if sometimes overschematic portrait of the professional purdah Franklin endured in and out of the laboratory. (She's called "Miss" not "Doctor," and can't eat lunch with the men because the staff club doesn't allow women.)

Vanessa Stalling's deft, thoughtful staging features a stellar Chaon Cross as the suffer-no-fools Franklin. The memory-play direct-address narrative device feels a bit clunky at times, but allows us to see how the men surrounding Franklin—from her smitten-but-condescending lab supervisor, Maurice Wilkins (Nathan Hosner), to the

sexist and anti-Semitic James Watson (Alex Goodrich, in fine smirking fettle)—view her. (Mostly, they're puzzled at her utter lack of interest in catering to their needs.)

We catch brief glimpses of Franklin's vulnerability only late in the play. But the importance of her work (including the titular finding that unlocked the secret of DNA) looms large in terrific projections designed by Paul Deziel that illuminate Arnel Sancianco's clever set. (Matching spiral staircases at each end suggest the double helix.) And as reports from women in labs today tell us, sexism still remains entwined in the DNA of scientific research. —**KERRY REID** *PHOTOGRAPH 51* Through 2/17: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat-Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis, 773-753-4472, courttheatre.org, \$50-\$74.

RR Beckett in the backyard

The Realistic Joneses face the existential dread of suburbia.

A cavernous lyricism gives Will Eno's wry, deadpan, seemingly inconsequential plays their near debilitating resonance and often gets the Brooklyn-based playwright anointed the Next Beckett. And this coy, static backyard drama, which marked Eno's Broadway debut in 2014, certainly has a Beckettian flavor. Two married couples named Jones—one a decade or so younger than the other—mostly dither and stall and circumvent their way through several banal days, always peculiarly on edge as though some undefinable, momentous threat is perpetually in the offing. It's easy to imagine Eno has essentially substituted Beckett's postwar existential void with the anomie of contemporary suburban America.

But as the performances in director Jeremy Wechsler's gentle yet rigorous staging make clear, the four Joneses run not from indeterminacy but from excessive certainty. Marriages don't last, passion leads to nothing, and death is everywhere. Yet facing such despair amid middle-class comfort, their uncalibrated fears find only meager expression: the language of daily life perpetually fails them, and nearly everything said is subject to rapid revision, reversal, or retraction. It's



The Realistic Joneses © EVAN HANOVER

as though they're flinging empty words at a world that isn't adequately tragic to cast their lives into clear relief.

It's Chekhov's world, where the struggle to matter is a sad farce, and this Shattered Globe-Theater Wit coproduction astutely and affectingly captures its myriad gray tones. The cast is uniformly excellent—so good that, for once, everyone onstage is working with as many cylinders firing as the always outstanding H.B. Ward. —**JUSTIN HAYFORD** *THE REALISTIC JONESES* Through 3/9: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont, 773-975-8150, sgtheatre.org, \$30-\$74, \$28 seniors, \$20 29 and under.



Swamp Baby © SHEPSU AAKHU

Freak show

The actors in *Swamp Baby* bring dignity and humanity to this allegory of xenophobia.

An advertisement allegedly produced by Aeromexico recently went viral offering a discount proportional to the percentage of Mexican heritage its American customers could demonstrate. In the video, tequila-loving, burrito-eating 'Murrikans aren't sure if they are winning or getting a boobsy prize for the (spoiler!) Mexican blood found flowing through their pale, pale veins. This is only funny because the same xenophobia that conceived of the one-drop rule hasn't been bred or bled out yet.

Aaron Carter's *Swamp Baby*, premiering at MPAACT in the direction of Lauren "LL" Lundy, is a poetic allegory that reflects the lust for the exotic and the fear of contamination that characterizes the idea of miscegenation. Green-skinned orphan teenager Swamp Baby (Myesha-Tiara) grew up in the saddest little freak

show in the south: just her, Sylphe the "armless wonder" (Stephanie Mattos), and their abusive, greasy-haired handler Armand Aubigny (Rory Zacher). Aubigny is former plantation aristocracy and dreams of reclaiming fame and wealth as an impresario-anthropologist-naturalist at the 1904 World's Fair. *Swamp Baby* fantasizes about a mysterious woman named Desirée (Destiny Strothers) who sometimes sings to her in visions. A doctor (Rob Frankel) arrives to examine her, but he mostly works with a crystal ball, so never mind about science. This could be one terrible tall tale, except the beautiful language of the play is so expertly handled by the cast, especially Mattos and Strothers, who bring out the dignity and humanity in their characters. Where these two shine, so does *Swamp Baby*. —**IRENE HSIAO** *SWAMP BABY* Through 3/3: Fri-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln, 773-404-7336, mpaact.org, \$38, \$28 students and seniors. **R**



Photograph 51 © MICHAEL BROSILOW

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GAVAGAI ★★★

Directed by Rob Tregenza. In English and subtitled Norwegian. 89 min.
Facets Cinémathèque, 1517 W. Fullerton, 773-281-9075, facets.org, \$10.

FILM



Gavagai

MOVIES

Lost—and then found—in translation

Gavagai is hard to explain, but thanks to a combination of poetry and camerawork, easy to feel.

By BEN SACHS

The title of *Gavagai*, an internationally coproduced art film playing this week at Facets Cinémathèque, refers to a word in a made-up language invented by American philosopher W.V. Quine in his thesis on the indeterminacy of translation. I won't pretend to understand Quine, but thankfully he's not discussed in the film, which in fact contains little dialogue. Rather, cowriter-director-cinematographer-editor Rob Tregenza employs the term as a clue to the movie's opaque content.

As you might guess, *Gavagai* is about the difficulties of translation, in both subject and form. The main character is a German tourist trying to translate the poetry of Norwegian author Tarjei Vesaas (1897-1970) into Chinese; in a formal analogue to the story, Tregenza

spotlights the difficulties of translating into cinematic terms both poetry and the internal experience. The filmmaking is ravishing. Tregenza employs long takes and elaborate yet gracefully executed camera movements—you could say it flows like a poem. Yet Tregenza often reminds us how movies and poems are dissimilar, not to mention how movies can't convey emotions as precisely as poems do. The most interesting thing about *Gavagai* may be that it produces something so calming out of such a jarring clash of art forms.

Prior to *Gavagai*, I'd seen only one other film that Tregenza directed, his debut feature, *Talking to Strangers* (1988), though I'd seen two on which he'd served as cinematographer, Alex Cox's *Three Businessmen* (1998) and Béla Tarr's *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000). These three films are enough to reveal his core fixations—namely the tension that arises from combining extended intricate camera movements and seemingly spontaneous onscreen behavior as well as the attendant thematic question of whether our lives are shaped by destiny or chance. They're also enough to convince any discerning viewer of Tregenza's mastery. His first new feature to play Chicago in roughly two decades, *Gavagai* constitutes something of an experimental "event" movie. That it's not as great as the films mentioned above doesn't mean it's any less impressive on a formal level or that it offers any less to think about. The film runs a little under an hour and a half and comprises just 22 shots, nearly all of them ambitious in some way. *Gavagai* is a must-see for fans of long-take cinema, but

more importantly, it's the rare movie successfully designed to satisfy poetry lovers.

Tregenza introduces the film's aesthetic concerns in the first shot. It begins in daytime as a train pulls into a station somewhere in rural Norway. A German man, identified only in the end credits as Carsten Neuer (and played by Andreas Lust), disembarks the train and walks away from the station. The camera briefly follows him on his path, then stops to observe him walking away and ultimately out of the shot, leaving viewers to meditate on the empty landscape. As all this is happening, Lust reads an English translation of Vesaas's poem "The Journey" over the soundtrack. It begins:

At last we emerged
from the night mist. No one recognized any
one now.

The faculty was lost on the journey.

No one asked or demanded:

Who are you?

Tregenza lets Vesaas's words fill out the personless image until Lust runs back onto the screen and past the camera, which pans right to observe him getting back on the train, then emerging with his jacket. Lust rests on a bench for a moment, then leaves the frame again.

This impressive shot tells us little about Carsten's character, but it conjures up all sorts of emotions through the combination of the poem, the depopulated location, and the detached, ghostly presence of the camera. Tregenza manages to sustain this complex mood over the next half hour of *Gavagai*, despite the fact that he reveals almost nothing else about the protagonist during this time. The filmmaker focuses on straightforward actions and interpersonal conflicts: Carsten, who can't drive, meets a tour guide (Mikkel Gaup) and hires him as a driver. The two men go to some woods a few hundred miles away; when they return, Carsten asks the guide for a ride several hundred miles north to the town of Vinje. Before they depart the next morning, the tour guide learns from his girlfriend (Anni-Kristiina Juuso) that she's pregnant; he responds to the news with shock, which upsets her, then takes off with Carsten. It's only at this point in the film that the hero discusses his translation project, explaining that he's doing it as a testament to his late wife, a Chinese woman who wanted to share Vesaas's poetry with the Chinese-speaking world. Also around this time, Tregenza reveals that Carsten is traveling with his dead wife's ashes, leading one to predict (correctly) that he intends to scatter them during his journey.

It would all seem very simple if it weren't for the frequent overlays of Vesaas's poetry and Tregenza's lovely camerawork, which sometimes follows the actors' movements but more often goes off on its own path or else pauses to reflect calmly on the action. There's also the matter of Carsten's wife's ghost, who appears unexpectedly and walks slowly around the frame. Tregenza likes to use these different effects (poetry, camerawork, supernatural plot elements) to contrapuntal effect, as when he sets an early scene in a grocery store to a poem about ambition and adventure. ("They journeyed for a dream, / were ready to give their all . . . and the bonfire flares up on every horizon / while fresh seekers poke among the ashes.") But as *Gavagai* develops, the various components slowly jibe, yielding beautiful, polyphonic results. It doesn't matter that Tregenza withholds key details about the characters: we never know what Carsten does for living, what his marriage was like, or why his wife loved Vesaas's poetry so much. Through the manipulation of cinematic form and spoken verse, Tregenza expresses feelings—like grief, gratitude, and longing—that are hard to express through conventional psychological drama.

Gavagai is not just an emotional movie, but a sensual one. Tregenza's lyrical camera movements and the actors' recitations of Vesaas's poetry contribute most plainly to this effect, but what makes the film enthralling is the near erotic sense of possibility that the filmmaker creates at any given time. Because we only know the characters through what Tregenza hints about their emotional states, we can relate to them but never be completely sure of what they'll do. This push-pull feeling between knowing and not knowing reaches a head in the film's climax, which unfolds in its longest single shot. Having reached his final destination, Carsten overlooks a valley from a wooded peak in the rain. He crouches by a fire pit, takes from his knapsack the urn containing his wife's ashes, then scatters them along with several pieces of paper. At some point he mumbles in a language other than English that Tregenza refuses to subtitle. There's so much the viewer still wants to know about Carsten, yet it's remarkable how close one feels to him by this point in the film. That indistinct yet strong emotional connection is the stuff of poetry, cinematic and otherwise. **F**

🐦 @1bsachs

★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ AVERAGE ★ POOR ● WORTHLESS

FILM

NOW PLAYING

RR Cold War

Polish director Pawel Pawlikowski's latest film chronicles—stopping just short of celebrating—an affair that blazes across a postwar European landscape already strewn with too many ashes, and grimly divided by the Iron Curtain and closing borders. The attraction is immediate when Zula (Joanna Kulig) and Wiktor (Tomasz Kot) first meet in 1949 rural Poland. He's a refined composer and musicologist in his 40s, chafing under Stalinism as he catalogs traditional folk songs and auditions performers for a new touring folk troupe. She is one of the hopefuls, a vibrant twentysomething scrapper determined to escape her dead-end lower-class origins. They are mismatched in terms of temperament, sensibility, pragmatism, ethics, and drive, but their sexual connection is so strong that their liaison survives her first betrayal (when she spies on him for a Communist party climber) and the many other disputes and recriminations that follow throughout their 15-year-long on-again, off-again relationship. —**ANDREA GRONVALL R**, 88 min. *Music Box Theatre*. Visit musicboxtheatre.com for showtimes.

Dead Snow

A coed group of Norwegian medical students arrives at a cabin near the giant Oksfjordjokelen glacier, hoping to ride snowmobiles and get laid, but their holiday fun is spoiled by zombie storm troopers left over from the Nazi occupation. Combining the undead and the Third Reich seems like a novel idea—the peanut butter and jelly of trash culture—but in fact Spanish exploitation legend Jesus Franco already got to it back in 1981 with *Oasis of the Zombies*. Tommy Wirkola, who wrote and directed this feature, sticks closely to formula, and his snarky attitude toward the young campers precludes much sympathy for them. But gore hounds will enjoy the comic mayhem and picturesque blood splatter on the virgin snow. In Norwegian with subtitles. —**J.R. JONES** 2009 *R*, 91 min. 35mm. *Fri 2/1-Sat 2/2, midnight. Music Box*

RR Eve's Bayou

Unlike most stories that allude to incest, this intriguingly fractured 1997 narrative acknowledges the complexity of the faddish topic. Samuel L. Jackson plays the roguish father of ten-year-old Eve (Jurnee Smollett), whose mother and aunt seem to tolerate his extramarital affairs. Subplots are woven stealthily into the story, taking the pressure off the central drama, allowing it to be affecting rather than melodramatic, and heightening the atmosphere of the lush Louisiana setting. Aunt Mozelle (Debbi Morgan), who's both clairvoyant and practical, is intimidated by the idea of fate and delivers some of the movie's edgiest dialogue when she worries that she may be cursed because the men she marries keep dying. Written and directed by Kasi Lemmons. —**LISA ALSPECTOR** 1985 *R*, 109 min. 35mm. *Sat 2/2-Sun 2/3, 11:30 AM. Music Box*

Fame

Another environmental study by Alan Parker, whose previous investigations included a Turkish prison (*Midnight Express*) and a miniature Chicago (*Bugsy Malone*). This time it's the New York High School of Performing Arts, where half a dozen main characters struggle to overcome their one-note personal problems through a cathartic application of Art. The film is cut at such a frenzied pitch that it's often possible to believe (mistakenly)



The Grand Bizarre

that something significant is going on. With Irene Cara, Lee Curreri, Eddie Barth, and Laura Dean. —**DAVE KEHR** 1980 *Thu 2/7, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

RR The Grand Bizarre

Jodie Mack, the most playful and imaginative avant-garde filmmaker of her generation, delivers her longest work to date, and the results are characteristically inspired. The overarching theme is the many facets of graphic design. Mack creates a breathtaking montage with shots of maps, printed alphabets, computer code, and intricately patterned textiles (the latter being an ongoing motif in the director's work). The film also considers a variety of locations, among them shipyards, airports, and open-air bazaars; rather than interrupt the flow of close-up images, the location shots complement them, challenging viewers' perceptions of what constitutes large and small forms of human ingenuity. Despite the headiness of Mack's concerns, the filmmaker maintains a light tone throughout, incorporating stop-motion animation, speed-up motion, and bouncy electronic music (the score generates beats from sources ranging from airplane engines to industrial looms). What emerges is a sense of wonderment toward sights and sounds one normally takes for granted. —**BEN SACHS** 61 min. 35mm. *Showing with Mack's 2018 short Hoarders without Boarders 1.0. Mack attends the screening. Thu 2/7, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR Hale County This Morning, This Evening

RaMell Ross's remarkable debut feature is as much an experimental film as it is a documentary, and it succeeds smashingly on both fronts. The director shot it between 2012 and 2017, during which time he taught photography and coached basketball at a predominantly black high school in rural Alabama. "Photographing in my day-to-day I began filming, using time to figure out how we've come to be seen," Ross explains in an opening title card, and what follows challenges traditional notions of representation with regard to both rural and black American life. The film moves unpredictably between moments of domestic intimacy and scenes of public life, proceeding according to a mysterious logic that often suggests something out of a dream. (Not coincidentally, the great Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul served as a creative adviser.) Ross's subjects come to seem almost impenetrably complex, even as the film remains accessible in its emotional content and images of natural beauty. —**BEN SACHS** 76 min. *Fri 2/1, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art* **FREE**

RR I Am Cuba

Some of the most exhilarating camera movements and most luscious black-and-white cinematography you'll ever see inhabit this singular, delirious 141-minute communist propaganda epic of 1964, a Cuban-Russian production poorly received in both countries at the time (in Cuba it was often referred to as "I Am Not Cuba"). Directed by Mikhail Kalatozov—best known in the West for his 1957 *The Cranes Are Flying*—from a screenplay by Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Enrique Pineda Barnet, this multipart hymn to the Cuban communist revolution may be dated to the point of campiness in much of its rhetoric, but it stands alongside the unfinished masterworks of Sergei Eisenstein and Orson Welles about Latin America, *Que Viva Mexico* and *It's All True*, two parallel celebrations from foreign perspectives. (The constructivist shack occupied by a Havana prostitute in the first episode is one example of stylization run amok here.) In Spanish and Russian with subtitles. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 2006 141 min. *Amy Heller and Dennis Doros, founders of Milestone Films, which distributes the film, attend the screening. Fri 2/1, 7 PM. Logan Center for the Arts* **FREE**

The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love

This sweet, tender, exciting feature by writer-director Maria Maggenti is about the puppy love that blossoms between two high school seniors: a rebellious tomboy pothead gas-station attendant who lives with her aunt in an all-lesbian household and a popular wealthy black intellectual. Maggenti doesn't always have her technique together—there are some awkward voice-overs, and a couple of secondary performances are overblown—but her feeling for the lead characters and for adolescence in general is so energizing that these lapses seem minor. This movie triumphs even when it makes a sudden transition toward the end from romantic comedy to farce. With Laurel Holloman and Nicole Parker. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 1995 *R*, 94 min. 35mm. *Tue 2/5, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

RR Jane: An Abortion Service

An hour-long 1995 video documentary by Chicagoans Kate Kirtz and Nell Lundy about the women's health collective Jane, whose members performed 12,000 safe but illegal abortions within the University of Chicago community between 1969 and 1973. The oral history that emerges—which links this work to other political activities of the period even as it distinguishes

it from them—is a fascinating and important chronicle. The video is limited at times by the difficult task of representing events recounted in the interviews when appropriate footage isn't available, but the overall story is indelible. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 1985 58 min. 16mm. *Jane Collective member Judith Arcana attends the screening. Sat 2/2, 1 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art* **FREE**

RR The Magnificent Ambersons

Orson Welles's second feature (1942) is in many ways his most personal and most impressive, but of his Hollywood films it's also the one most damaged by insensitive reediting (like the sublime and personal *Don Quixote* is among his independent features); in his absence RKO cut the movie by almost 45 minutes and tacked on a few lamentable new scenes (including the last one). For the most part, this is a very close adaptation of Booth Tarkington's underrated novel about the relentless decline of a wealthy midwestern family through the rise of industrialization, though Welles makes the story even more powerful through his extraordinary mise-en-scene and some of the finest acting to be found in American movies (Agnes Moorehead is a standout). The emotional sense of America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is so palpable you can taste it. With Joseph Cotten, Dolores Costello, Anne Baxter, Tim Holt, Ray Collins, and Richard Bennett. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 2002 88 min. 35mm. *Former Reader film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum lectures at the Tuesday screening. Fri 2/1, 2 and 6 PM; and Tue 2/5, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR The Prowler

Though it dates from the first years of his career (1951), this hallucinatory film noir is still, for me, Joseph Losey's best film. Beat cop Van Heflin falls in obsessional love with Evelyn Keyes, whose unseen husband is a disc jockey; their trysts are timed to his radio show. A *Double Indemnity* plot is hatched, which leads to a wildly stylized finale in a desert ghost town. For once, Losey declines his Brechtian "distance"; the result is a film with a vivid sense of entrapment as well as a cool, critical intelligence. Heflin, cast in the Losey line of male hysterics, gives his most impressive performance. With John Maxwell and Katharine Warren; the photography, which moves eloquently from cast-iron night to blinding sun, is by Arthur Miller. —**DAVE KEHR** 2009 92 min. 35mm. *Thu 2/7, 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

RR Secret Beyond the Door. . .

Fritz Lang's third thriller (1948) with Joan Bennett (after *Scarlet Street* and *The Woman in the Window*), a Freudian version of the Bluebeard story, is probably the most psychoanalytically oriented of his features, and because it's Lang, the murkiness is mainly a strength. Silvia Richards, who later worked on both Lang's *Rancho Notorious* and King Vidor's *Ruby Gentry*, is credited with the script, adapting a story by Rufus King. With Michael Redgrave and Ann Revere. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 2007 99 min. 35mm archival print. *Fri 2/1, 7 and 9:30 PM, and Sun 2/3, 1:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

Shoplifters

With *Shoplifters*, which won the Palme d'Or at this year's Cannes Film Festival, Japanese writer-director Hirokazu Kore-eda strikes a balance between the two sides of his creative persona, with neither one overwhelming the other. *Shoplifters* alternates between tender and

Get showtimes at chicagoreader.com/movies.

sobering observations, and the frequent alternations keep the movie unpredictable. Kore-eda doesn't just change the emotional register from scene to scene, but within individual scenes; he also manages these shifts so gracefully that they never feel jarring. When he moves from a sentimental mood to a stark one, the effect is like being woken with a splash of cold water; yet when Kore-eda transitions the other way, it feels like he's retreating from his own insights. These moments of retreat, which make *Shoplifters* an occasionally frustrating experience, speak to Kore-eda's worst tendency as a filmmaker—his Spielbergian desire to reassure, if not placate, his audience in spite of the bitter truths he has to share with them. Thankfully these moments aren't fatally distracting, as Kore-eda's head is around to keep his heart in check. **—BEN SACHS 2018 R, 121 min. At Music Box Theatre: Sat 2/2, 11:20 AM, and Mon 2/4-Wed 2/6, 2 PM. At Doc Films: Sat 2/2, 7 and 9:30 PM, and Sun 2/3, 4 PM. At Gene Siskel Film Center: Fri 2/1, 2 and 6 PM; Sat 2/2, 3 and 7:45 PM; Sun 2/3, 5 PM; Mon 2/4, 7:45 PM; Tue 2/5, 6 PM; Wed 2/6, 8 PM; and Thu 2/7, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center, Music Box, Univ. of Chicago Doc Films**

RR They Shall Not Grow Old

The title is a misnomer: Peter Jackson's documentary about the British soldiers of World War I is narrated by old men, veterans who were recorded by the BBC and the Imperial War Museums in the 1960s and '70s. Collectively they tell the story of their war, from enlistment and basic training to the trenches in France to their return home in 1918; it is, by turns, funny, gross, terrifying, and heartbreaking. There's neither glory nor heroism; after just a short time on the Western front most of them no longer remembered what they were supposed to be fighting for. One million of them died—just from the British army. The narration is accompanied by archival photos and film footage from the IWM, restored and colorized by Jackson and his crew and projected in 3-D. This sometimes gives the visuals an artificial Madame Tussaud's effect, but at their best, this is as close as we can get to a full immersion into one of the most horrifying and ultimately pointless wars in modern history. **—AIMEE LEVITT 2018 R, 99 min. ArcLight Cinemas, City North 14, River East 21, Webster Place 11**

RR Viridiana

Luis Buñuel returned to his native Spain to create this 1961 masterpiece, which marked his rebirth as a filmmaker of international repute. Mexican star Silvia Pinal plays the title character, a girl about to enter a convent whose confident plans for sainthood are interrupted by her uncle's (false) announcement that he has raped her in her sleep. She forges ahead anyway, filling her uncle's estate with beggars and madmen in an obsessive demonstration of Christian charity. Franco's government, which financed the film, later attempted to suppress it, burning all the prints that remained in Spain. Luckily, a few had already been sent to France, and the rest—Buñuel's brilliant late period—is history. With Fernando Rey and Francisco Rabal. In Spanish with subtitles. **—DAVE KEHR 1985 90 min. Sun 2/3, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films**

The World Before Your Feet

Matt Green, the curious subject of this simple yet sweeping documentary, is on a mission to walk every block of New York City's five boroughs. He started this project, along with a blog of research and photographs of what he encounters on his walks, nearly seven years ago; by the film's close, he is content to see no end in

sight. A middle-aged minimalist, Green preserves his ambling lifestyle by crashing with friends and acquaintances, pet sitting, and living on \$15 a day. Director-producer-editor Jeremy Workman, who also holds the camera during Green's outings, includes perspectives that challenge Green's own, such as ex-girlfriends who note Green's resistance to future planning and a fellow walker who says, as a black man, he must think about how he presents himself in a way that Green, as a white man, does not. Still, Green's openness to learning about himself and others by going out to notice and appreciate what most overlook—a crumbled landmark, an unexpected garden—is edifying. **—LEAH PICKETT 95 min. Subject Matt Green attends the Friday 7:45 PM and Saturday 5:30 PM screenings. Fri 2/1, 3:45 and 7:45 PM; Sat 2/2, 5:30 PM; Sun 2/3, 3 PM; Mon 2/4, 6 PM; Wed 2/6, 6 PM; and Thu 2/7, 8:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center**

ALSO PLAYING

Films by Shayna Connelly

A program of short films (2015-'19) by local filmmaker and DePaul University professor Shayna Connelly. **54 min. Connelly attends the screening. Sat 2/2, 7 PM. Chicago Filmmakers**

The Image Book

Jean-Luc Godard's experimental Swiss-French documentary-essay film uses a carefully constructed soundtrack and a densely edited collage of footage to explore a wide-ranging set of subjects, including cinema, history, religion, and more. In English and subtitled French, Arabic, Italian, and German. **84 min. Fri 2/1, 4:15 and 8:15 PM; Sat 2/2, 5:30 PM; Sun 2/3, 3 PM; Mon 2/4, 6 and 8 PM; Tue 2/5, 8:15 PM; Wed 2/6, 6 PM; Thu 2/7, 8:15 PM; Fri 2/8, 4 and 8 PM; Sat 2/9, 5:45 PM; Sun 2/10, 3:30 PM; Mon 2/11, 6 PM; Tue 2/12, 6 PM; Wed 2/13, 8:30 PM; Thu 2/14, 8:15 PM; Fri 2/15, 3:45 and 8 PM; Sat 2/16, 3 and 6:30 PM; Sun 2/17, 2 PM; Mon 2/18, 6 PM; Tue 2/19, 8:15 PM; Wed 2/20, 6 and 7:45 PM; and Thu 2/21, 8:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center**

Mouth Harp in a Minor Key: Hamid Naficy In/On Exile

Maryam Sepehri directed this Iranian-U.S. documentary about Northwestern University film professor and scholar Hamid Naficy. In English and subtitled Persian. **62 min. Sepehri and Naficy attend both screenings. Showing with Naficy's 1969 documentary Ellis Island (38 min.). Sat 2/2, 8 PM, and Sun 2/3, 4:45 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center**

An Opera of the World

Malian-born NYU professor, scholar, and filmmaker Manthia Diawara directed this 2017 documentary about migration that is centered on rehearsals for a Malian production of a Sahel opera but also includes interviews, personal reflections, and archival footage. **70 min. Diawara attends the screening. Wed 2/6, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art FREE**

Police Story

Perhaps the most celebrated vehicle for Jackie Chan, the biggest star of the Asian cinema. Directed by Chan himself, this 1985 detective thriller is set in Hong Kong and features numerous comic and death-defying stunts by Chan; the Taiwanese actress Lin Qingxia costars. In Mandarin with subtitles. **92 min. At Music Box Theatre. Visit musicboxtheatre.com for showtimes.** 

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Drug Companies Fear Release Of New \$2 Sex Pill For Older Men

Men in clinical trial see huge boost in desire, strength of erections, and sexual activity without side effects.

NEW YORK - It's hard to believe that in America today an affordable pill that could improve the sex lives of millions of men is in danger of being yanked from the shelves. And it's just because big drug companies fear for their profits.

The pharmaceutical industry is desperately trying to stop shipments of the remarkable new "JackedUp" pill. Big Pharma is worried because men are reporting increased sex drive, stronger erections and more stamina - all without the side-effects and \$40-per-pill price tag associated with drugs like Viagra. Clinical results show men feel these benefits within just a few weeks of taking JackedUp's active ingredient.

The pill, made for men over 50, was released early last

"If you're over 50 and suffering from low sex drive, decreased stamina and inability to perform, low testosterone is the biggest factor. Drug companies do NOT want men to know about this affordable new pill..."

month. Despite Big Pharma's efforts, sales have already exceeded expectations.

Exciting Benefits

There are very good reasons why sales are booming and drug companies want it gone. Apart from costing just two dollars per daily dose, the clinical results confirm JackedUp's active ingredient is very impressive. It greatly boosts a man's ability to get and keep erections. Stamina during sex also improves.

The product also has a unique ability to help men feel more passion, desire, and sex drive. These impressive benefits come from boosting testosterone levels by up to a whopping 193%. Doctors are astounded by its effects.

Why do drug companies want this pill stopped? Since the "JackedUp" pill is natural, drug companies can't patent it (like they did with Viagra) and make big profits. Plus, if you're over 50 and suffering from low sex drive, decreased stamina and inability to perform, low testosterone is the biggest factor. If you can safely boost your testosterone, *you won't need their expensive pills.* That's the very reason big business is trying to have it pulled from the shelves.

Strong Clinical Results Worry Big Pharma

Recent clinical trials on JackedUp's active ingredient have made the drug companies more desperate. The trial results were published in major medical journals, and doctors are now recommending JackedUp to patients.

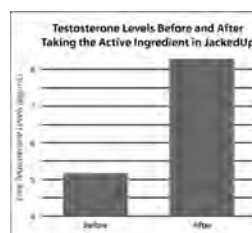
The testing was done on men 40 - 65 years old, and the results were remarkable. The men who took

the active ingredient in JackedUp reported major improvements in their sex lives. Their ability to get and keep erections went up by over 200%. Libido and sex drive surged. Even staying power and stamina during sex more than doubled!

Head of product development, Dave McNeill, said the big drug companies weren't worried at first. "They didn't care because the active ingredient can take a few weeks before many men really feel the benefits. But these awesome clinical trials really got their attention. They're learning A LOT of men will wait a few weeks if it means avoiding negative side effects and saving money."

How It Works

The "JackedUp" pill works by helping older men produce more testosterone. It doesn't force dangerous fake testosterone into your body like injections do. Instead, it works with your body to produce testosterone naturally.



And the results have been extraordinary. It's like your body reboots itself to feel like it did in the prime of your life.

Initial Users Are Thrilled...And Worried

"JackedUp has been awesome for my sex drive and performance! I'm worried it may not be available in the future. The idea that it may be taken away just to secure some big drug company's profits is very frustrating."

- Rob H., 49 years old, Colorado Springs, CO

"My wife and I were both sexually vibrant until I had prostate cancer. After my surgery we tried everything my doctor recommended but nothing worked. Within a few weeks of taking JackedUp, everything has been functioning beautifully and we've been riding high ever since!"

- Ken S., 78 years old, Phoenix, AZ

Doctors Speak Out

Drug companies are also concerned that doctors are now recommending JackedUp. The active ingredient has strong clinical results and lacks the side effects seen in current drugs on the market. This makes it an easy option for doctors to suggest.

Dr. Laguna-Bedia, a specialist in internal medicine says, "A lot of men think their lack of interest and inability to perform are simply parts of aging. This is just not true. JackedUp can help these men regain a healthy appetite for



Big Pharma Worried: Older men are having better sex after taking the newly released \$2 pill called JackedUp. Clinical trials show active ingredient triggers surge in desire, strength of erections, and sexual activity in older men.

sex and the physical ability to perform."

"JackedUp works by boosting key male hormones without side effects. The benefits of these hormones to sexual health are well known, but they actually do more than that. Men also report more energy, less body fat and higher motivation," said Dr. G. Pereira, a renowned surgeon in Florida.

Dr. Jacob Moss notes, "I recommend JackedUp if you're struggling with getting and keeping erections or low libido. It's also a great option for men who want to last longer and have more control over when they orgasm."

Special Opportunity for Our Readers

Drug companies are fighting hard to get rid of this product. This is making inventory disappear fast. Thankfully, a special discounted supply has been reserved for Chicago Reader readers. But only for those who call within the next 48 hours.

This is the best opportunity to try JackedUp risk-free with their 100% results guarantee.

A Regional Order Hotline has been set up for local readers to call. This gives all men an equal chance to try JackedUp.

Starting at 6:00 am today the order hotline will be open for the next 48 hours. All you have to do is call TOLL FREE 1-888-876-7437 and the company will do the rest.

Due to the possibility of JackedUp being pulled from the shelf, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back. Current supplies of JackedUp are limited, and callers that don't get through to the order hotline within the next 48 hours will be forced to wait for more inventory to be produced. This can take as long as 6 weeks.

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Angel Bat Dawid

taps into the
root of all
black music



© LESLIE FREMPONG

The cofounder of Chicago's Participatory Music Coalition talks about the improvisation and inspiration that shaped her new album, *The Oracle*.

By **LEOR GALIL**

ANGEL BAT DAWID & THE BROTHAHOOD, WYCHE/PACKARD DUO
Thu 2/7, 9 PM, Elastic Arts,
3429 W. Diversey ste. 208, \$10
suggested donation, all ages

In 2014 Angel Elmore quit a job selling high-end lingerie that she'd held for seven years, cashed out a 401(k) worth nearly \$10,000, and moved into a coach house in Greater Grand Crossing. She was 34 years old, and she wanted to take a year to pursue a dream she'd nurtured ever since her first piano lesson at age 12: to become a musician. Throughout her 20s, that dream had seemed out of reach. She'd flunked out of the Moody Bible Institute, and during her junior year at Roosevelt University, when she was 22, she was diagnosed with a brain tumor that eventually required surgery. At 27 she grieved the death of her older sister. But Elmore kept music close, even when she didn't yet feel ready to make it her life: "It's always been my best friend," she says. "It ain't ever let me down."

Elmore sings, composes, and plays keyboards and clarinet, and during the year she'd

given herself to focus on music, she found the regular free-jazz sessions that Chicago saxophonist David Boykin convenes through his organization Sonic Healing Ministries. Soon she founded a community-centric collective called the Participatory Music Coalition with like-minded musicians she met there: Adam Zanolini, who's since become executive director of the Elastic Arts Foundation, and interdisciplinary installation and performance artist Viktor Le Givens.

Anytime Elmore saw an opportunity to play, with the Coalition or without it, she said yes. By taking any gig she could, sometimes with musicians she'd never met, she grew into an important player in Chicago's loose community of jazz and improvising musicians. In the years since, she's accompanied some of the city's celebrated recent exports, among them Ben LaMar Gay and Jaimie Branch, and performed in the sprawling, ambitious Black

Monument Ensemble led by Eternals front man Damon Locks.

At the end of 2014, Elmore took a job at Hyde Park Records, but the fire she'd lit continued to grow. A few months ago she quit to focus on music full-time, and that part of her life could get a lot busier very soon. Next week, tastemaking Chicago-based jazz label International Anthem will release her album *The Oracle*, credited to Angel Bat Dawid—it's her Facebook name ("Bat Dawid" is Hebrew for "daughter of David"), and after someone put it on a show flyer a couple years ago, she ran with it.

Elmore, now 39, says she's recorded several albums' worth of material, but this is the first time she's had a record come out on a label. To celebrate she's playing a concert at Elastic Arts on Thursday, February 7, with her band the Brothahood: Zanolini on bass, fellow Participatory Music Coalition regulars ➔



Angel Bat Dawid recorded most of *The Oracle* in this small studio on the third floor of the Radcliffe W. Hunter House of Saint Thomas Episcopal Church in Bronzeville. LESLIE FREMPONG



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Norman Long on electronics and Xris Espinoza on reeds, Julian Otis on vocals, and Isaiah Collier on drums (Le Givens is usually part of the Brothahood but can't make the show).

The spiritual jazz songs on *The Oracle* are loose and flowing, with interwoven layers of voice, horn, keys, percussion, and other instruments, and Elmore played almost every note herself—the album's only guest musician, Asher Simiso Gamedze, added drums on "Capetown." She recorded the music with her cell phone, using an app that allowed her to overdub, and some tracks include as many as seven stacked layers. Often the album feels like you're somehow eavesdropping on her during a private, contemplative moment.

Elmore recorded the album over a period of more than a year, beginning with "What Shall I Tell My Children Who Are Black" in 2017 and finishing with "We Are Starzz," which she wrote just in time to include in her set at New York's Winter Jazzfest earlier this month. She did most of the work in a small studio space on the third floor of the Radcliffe W. Hunter House of Saint Thomas Episcopal Church, which is also home to several other art studios and a gallery at 3800 S. Michigan in Bronzeville. I met Elmore there, and we talked for nearly two hours about improvisational music, the legacy of Chicago's black south-side communities, and the inspiration for *The Oracle*. Her words are condensed and edited below.

The church right out this window is Saint Thomas Episcopal Church. One of the priests [Reverend Shahar Weaver], she's an artist—she's part of an art collective called Sapphire and Crystals, a women's art collective. She was like, "Well, we got this parish house that's empty on the top floor, and we're not doing anything with it—let's make artist spaces!" B'Rael [Ali Thunder] was the first one in here. When he told me, I was like, "Well, how do I get in?" He was like, "Just talk to her." She was like, "Cool, come on in!" The only thing that you have to do is do something in the community.

I proposed a workshop I wanted to lead, and this is a good way to talk about what's really important to me: improvised music. It's amazing how globally people know about AACM—Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. People know about Art Ensemble of Chicago, and the monumental contribution those musicians have made to music worldwide. The community doesn't really know; that's all a systemic thing, of putting out information and keeping it from where it's from. One of my passions is emphasizing how improvised music, experimental music, is black music too. It's not some weird "Oh, what's wrong with them," no! The root of all black music is improvisation—participatory music.

There's a workshop I do with a group, me and another friend of mine, Julian Otis, who's

in the Brothahood. We've been doing "Self Care = Resistance," so we really did it for ourselves: "OK, we're always doing shows, but when do we just get to heal ourselves?" We started doing these jam sessions where anybody can come, any level of musicianship, and we play together. I want to offer sonic healing to my community.

I like being right here. Another great thing about this place is the historical context—next door is Margaret Burroughs's house. This woman started a museum in her basement, 'cause she was like, "We've gotta keep our treasures. We gotta tell our narratives." South Side Community Art Center is right down the street, one of the oldest black community arts centers in the country. Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Zora Neale Hurston, all of them was walking right down this block, and I feel them. The creative vibration in Bronzeville, Chicago—it's just time to reactivate all of that. That's why I'm here!

I've been doing music since I was a little girl. I always remember singing. We lived in Africa when I was seven to 12; my parents were missionaries. When we came back to the States, I was like, "Give me lessons! I want to learn piano!" I started piano first—it was really, really hard, but I kept trying at it. Then I got to the clarinet. My earliest musical experience was classical. I love Mozart. *Amadeus*, that movie changed my life.

I loved it, but there was a part of me that always felt like, "I don't feel like a real musician 'cause I'm stuck to a page." My hand always wanted to kind of wander somewhere else. I didn't know that there was a context for what I was doing. My dad is a big music fanatic, so he had all sorts of music, lots of jazz: Sun Ra, Pharoah Sanders, all that. I would listen to his CDs, and when I heard Sun Ra, I was like, "What is that?" He had the movie *Space Is the Place*, and we watched it. I was like, "What just happened?" It's my first recollection of, like, "There's something out there that's like me."

At the South Side Community Art Center, I ran into a bunch of artists who I still perform with now. We did a show, and David Boykin—he has these jam sessions called Sonic Healing Ministries. He said, "Come to some of my free-jazz shit." I said, "Well, what do I do? Is there gonna be sheet music? I'm nervous." Jazz has always been that holy sanctuary, where you be like, "Gotta get my chops up, 'cause somebody might yell at you if you miss a note." I went to the jam session, and I'm like, "Well, what do we play?" He's like, "Just play anything. Just play." I went to town! That was my church—I went every Sunday.

I met so many friends at that session. Those friends were like, "OK, Sunday's not enough, we need to do this even more." I had a coach house at the time, and I was like, "My neighbors love live music—they love it when I ➔

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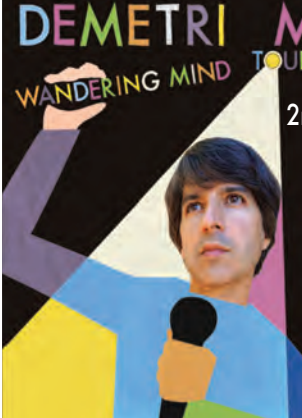
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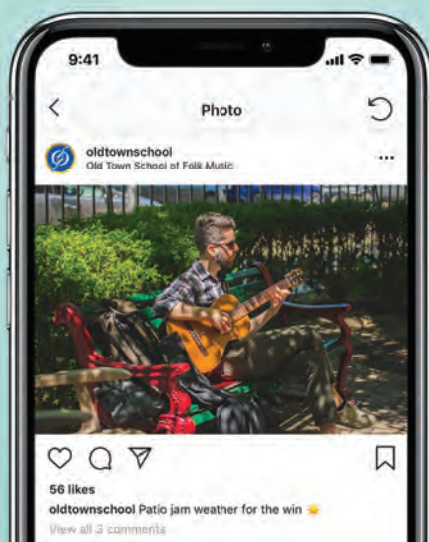
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continued from 32

play.” So we started doing jam sessions at my house. That turned into me discovering about AACM. I was like, “Wait a minute! You’re trying to tell me that there was a black collective of musicians who got together right around the block from me? I’m doing this music, and they’ve been doing it for 50 years, and I’m just now finding out about them?” I went berserk! Once you go into the avant-garde—Great Black Music, Ancient to the Future—there’s no turning back.

One thing I do love about Chicago’s music scene, especially this particular music scene: we’re like family. There may not be a lot of money in this, and that’s very frustrating. People got mouths to feed, and you want to be able to live off your art. But I’ve come to a lot of conclusions about that. Music can bring you money, but you can’t really put a price tag on your soul. Music is my soul.

That year, 2014, I was learning about the scene. I was halfway through the AACM book *A Power Stronger Than Itself*, by George Lewis. I’m reading it, and Adam Zanolini calls me: “Angel, guess who finna be at Constellation? Muhal Richard Abrams and Roscoe Mitchell.” I was like, “What? I was just reading about them! I’m there, let’s go.” I had the book, and I wanted them to sign it. I go up to Muhal—he was one of the founders of AACM—I was like, “Your book is so inspirational.” He looked at me, gave me a hug, and said, “If you take care of the music, it will take care of you.”

I’ve been riding on that. Anytime I get nervous about my finances, I’d be like, “Hold up! Take care of the music, Angel. Muhal said it would take care of me. He said it!” And I believe him, because look at his life. Look at his contributions to music. It took really good care of him. He died a noble man. Goodness, the dude was tired of playing the same shit and wanted to do something different and got a bunch of black folks together to do it, and they’re still doing it.

I’ve done a lot of music, and I was in a hip-hop group with my good friend DeLundon. He always used to say, “Angel, you remind me of the Oracle in *The Matrix*.” That was one of my favorite characters in *The Matrix*—they gotta go to a sista to get the knowledge. I took that on. I think by me taking it on I actually became that; oracles get messages from the divine.

All of the songs [on *The Oracle*] came at different points. Some of them are recorded a year ago. Participatory Music Coalition, we had the opportunity to do Music in the Parks with the Park District; that year they were

focusing on Margaret Burroughs and Gwendolyn Brooks. I was like, “I should write something.” I found that [Burroughs] poem, “What Shall I Tell My Children Who Are Black,” and some other poems and I created this Margaret Burroughs/Gwendolyn Brooks suite. I’ve gotta find this recording—we were out in the park, and there were all these cute babies. These kids came up, and this little girl came—I got her little voice singing, “What shall I tell.” Oh, it’s so cute. She was so precious.

I’ll travel a lot—I got the travel bug young. International Anthem, they were having this thing in London [in October 2017] with Makaya McCraven, Ben LaMar [Gay], Jaimie Branch. They’re friends of mine. And Art Ensemble was actually performing on my birthday, in London. I was like, “Ben, I’m going just for my birthday.” He’s like, “You bringing your horn? Want to play on my set?” Then I met Jaimie Branch. She’s like, “You wanna play in my set?” She wrote this part for me. I was like, “So not only am I going, I get to play with y’all?” The song “London” I actually recorded in London. My Airbnb, sweet couple—they had a piano.

South Africa was my trip last year. I love Africa so much—I didn’t realize how wonderful it is just to be around so much blackness. It was like a weight was off my shoulders; I didn’t even realize I was carrying weight. It’s not that Africa doesn’t have problems, but it was just this ancient blackness that you don’t get here, because America’s a very young nation. *Impepho* is this incense that—in the African spirituality tradition there, they burn this incense to connect with their ancestors, and there were some groups there that I met that were very intentional about that. There’s also this wonderful music called *gqom* music. It was like house, but it was different—it had this bass. I can’t claim that I’m doing any *gqom*, but I can hear its influence in [my song] “Impepho.” It rubbed off—that’s why I call myself a sonic archaeologist. I like to go to places, just like you leave fossils everywhere—hello, sonic sounds are still left there too! They rub off on you.

“Capetown,” that was a jam session. Met up with this guy Asher [Simiso Gamedze]. He’s like, “You want to come to my house and do a jam session?” So we went and we had this epic jam session that’s on the album. It’s all these kind of journeys.

I’ve got this collective of musicians [the Brothahood]. Everybody’s fuckin’ busy all the time, so I was like, “OK, you know what I’m gonna do, so that rehearsals can be like *boom boom boom*—I’m just gonna record for peo-



The family photo on the cover of Angel Bat Dawid's *The Oracle*, taken by her grandfather, depicts the artist at her baptism.

ple." Some musicians I work with, there's a mix of people who can read music and can't read music. The people who can't read music—I send them something, so that they'll hear it one time and get it. So a lot of the recordings, like "What Shall I Tell My Children Who Are Black," all of these were meant for a band to play. So that was just me recording all the parts. But the recordings actually sounded kinda good.

I've been playing a lot in the city. [International Anthem cofounder Scottie McNiece] had been to a few shows, and he's like, "Angel, you should put out an album—you want to put something out? Send me some stuff." And I was kind of nervous because I'm like, "Well, I recorded all of these on my phone." I was worried about the quality and shit like that. I knew how to mix, because I used to be really into hip-hop production. I have a simple multi-track app—you can put as many tracks as you want in there. I sent it to him, and they were like, "You all right! We'll get our man to master it." They didn't touch my mix.

You know what they say luck is—preparation meets opportunity. Being ready for the opportunity means you have to be disciplined: you gotta play music every day, it's got to be the most important thing you do, you've gotta believe in yourself more than anyone, you can't be iffy and insecure. If you don't believe it, no one will believe it. I don't care if anybody ever heard any of those songs; I like them. They're from my heart. If it was just me listening to them on my headphones, I'd be fine with that too. I like the album, and I think because

I like it, others like it—because they can hear me, they can really hear my true authentic self. That's me being Angel for real—I wasn't making that for no one but me. There wasn't even anybody in the room when I made those songs, except for the one with Asher.

The best way to collect memories is to just stay present. So if you do have that moment where you do want to go back in time, you can—we can be time travelers. You go back in time all the time. If there's been painful moments, some people don't like to go back to their painful moments, but you gotta be brave sometimes and go back. I go back to those painful moments as myself now, 'cause I'm stronger, and I comfort my little girl self.

So it's very appropriate that the cover for my album, that's my baptism. My dad, he showed me a comic book and it was this picture of hell, and I was like, "I ain't trying to go there! Hell no, what do I need to do?" He's like, "You gotta get baptized." I'm like, "Next Sunday, I'm getting baptized." So you look at that picture, I'm very serious, 'cause I'm like, "I am going to heaven. I'm gonna go to heaven."

And heaven is just what I'm talking about. If you want it to be someplace in the clouds, by all means; you can believe heaven to be whatever you want it to be. But for me, it's making every moment heaven. This is heaven: we're talking about cool shit, I'm about to be in the *Reader*, we're in my studio. I'm in heaven right now. I will always try to go to heaven. 

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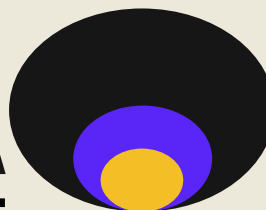
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SAM SCHMIEG

PICK OF THE WEEK

Mick Jenkins proves himself one of the best rappers in Chicago with *Pieces of a Man*

MICK JENKINS HAS become one of the best rappers in the city (if not the country) by making music that comes across as if he's inviting you into a deep conversation. Because his songs take on race, consent, systemic injustice, and black history, among other subjects, you can't passively listen to them—they require the kind of attentiveness that makes your listening experience an interaction. His best tunes arrive gilded and shine to a degree that it can take at least a couple dozen listens to begin to approach his headier points. The resplendent, soul-influenced sound of October's *Pieces of a Man* (Free Nation/Cinematic Music Group) bolsters Jenkins's ascendancy and makes the case for his crossover pop potential. Though he's a rapper with big bars and big ideas, when he half-croons in his commanding baritone atop tender adult-contemporary guitars on "Plain Clothes," I can picture a future when his voice graces R&B radio hits. And since Jenkins does a great job encouraging his listeners to reexamine the world around them and the roles they play in it, it's a change I hope arrives soon. —**LEOR GALIL**

THURSDAY31

CHICAGO PSYCH FEST See also Friday and Saturday. Mako Sica & Hamid Drake headline; Good Willsmith, McLuhan, and Wet Piss open. 8 PM, Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia, \$12. 21+

For ten years now, Chicago Psych Fest has been warping minds. Organized by musician and artist (and longtime Reader contributor) Steve Krakow and local artist Matt Ginsberg, the three-day festival is much like the classic shows held at the Fillmore (in San Francisco and NYC), the Kinetic Playground (in Chicago), the Grande Ballroom (in Detroit), and the Boston Tea Party (guess) during the genre's earliest days, with combinations of younger acts, veteran bands, and even influences from outside fuzz-tone rock. Thursday is highlighted by McLuhan, one of the rare rock bands to record for the Chicago-based Brunswick label in the early 70s, when it was dominated by soul artists such as the Chi-Lites. Although they had a full horn section when that was in vogue, McLuhan were more blatantly oriented toward prog than the likes of Chicago and Blood, Sweat & Tears, which made them something of an anomaly—in fact, it's the title of their 1972 debut (and only album). Also on Thursday, jazz-world percussionist Hamid Drake appears with experimental-rock trio Mako Sica. And on Saturday, Vee Dee, a modern-day heir of Blue Cheer, will re-form after a five-year period of dormancy. That same night also features Dos Santos, a group that bridges gaps between psychedelia and traditional Mexican folk, making stops along the way for jazz, R&B, and cumbia. Throughout the weekend, other groups on the bill will mix and match styles just to see what happens—often the best way to generate something new. On Friday, Krakow's group Plastic Crimewave Syndicate collaborates with south-side no-wavers Ono. As always, Chicago Psych Fest proves that psychedelia is more than just a light show, a Nehru jacket, and a strand of flea-market love beads—it's a state of mind. —**JAMES PORTER**



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3/03 - MYKELE DEVILLE	3/29 - MANSIONAIR
3/10 - THE FLESH EATERS	3/30 - HAYES CARLL
3/15 - BRONZE RADIO RETURN	4/03 - COM TRUISE
3/16 - CASS MCCOMBS	4/04 - OLIVIA O'BRIEN
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3/21 - SUMMER WALKER	4/11 - THE CRACKED PODCAST



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2/16 - SKELA	3/17 - EZRA COLLECTIVE
2/22 - GRAVES	3/19 - ELDER ISLAND
2/25 - ADIA VICTORIA	3/21 - OH PEP!
2/26 - BUCK MEEK	3/22 - ELUJAY
3/02 - LILY & MADELEINE	3/25 - METHYL ETHEL
3/04 - JUSTIN NOZUKA	3/26 - BETA RADIO
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3/08 - LIZ COOPER	3/31 - TOW'RS

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FEBRUARY 8	HEISENBERG UNCERTAINTY
FEBRUARY 10	PLAYERS 7PM
FEBRUARY 11	RC BIG BAND 7PM
FEBRUARY 12	JON RARICK NONET 9PM
FEBRUARY 13	FLABBY HOFFMAN SHOW 8PM ELIZABETH'S CRAZY LITTLE THING FEATURING MAYA KEYTAR 9PM
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Sun, Feb. 17 - Telfons / Sunny Side Up

Tue, Feb. 19 - Sean Rowe

Thu, Feb. 21 - Mary Lane & The Static Blues Band

Thu, Feb. 28 - Country Night In Berwyn

Fri, Mar. 1 - Bono Brothers

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2/13	Tcheka

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MUSIC

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EL HITTA *Elvy the God and LGado open. 6 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 2105 S. State, \$15, \$12 in advance.* **A**

When west-side rapper El Hitta dropped his breakthrough single, “Aww Yea,” in July, he put it out under his original name: El Hitla. “Everybody wanna name theyself off the bad guys,” he told the TRiibe in December. “Me not knowing what it was, I, you know, end up picking the name Hitler.” After doing more research on the genocidal demagogue and scourge of 20th-century Europe, the rapper changed his stage name to Hitta. That’s not exactly a friendly-sounding choice either, but Hitta is emerging as one of the city’s most promising rappers due to his ability to empathize with those who’ve struggled with violence. On December’s *Owe Nobody Nothin* (Groovy Gang/DUB Life), his shocking, resonant voice rumbles as if he’s taking big gulps of air while he raps, and his blustery bars lacerate the album’s most bombastic beats. Hitta comes across as tough, but his melodic sensibilities, emotive flow, and lyrical twists bring out affecting performances. Atop the rushed, dramatic piano melody on “Aww Yea,” he delivers the lines “People steady thinkin’ it’s a game / Till they whole life rearranged / Brains on his shirt, he a stain” as if they’re the last words he might ever utter. **—LEOR GALIL**

FACES OF THE BOG *Gravedirt, Coyote Man, and Satan’s Dealer open. 8 PM, Livewire Lounge, 3394 N. Milwaukee, \$10. 21+*

For a long time I thought the name of this local psychedelic-sludge powerhouse was related to the “bog people”—those scarily well-preserved ancient corpses that turn up from time to time in peat bogs in Europe, often bearing signs of violent deaths that have made some archaeologists think they were human sacrifices or executed criminals. Which is pretty damn metal. It turns out that’s not the case at all; their name means “Faces of the God,” using the Polish word for “god.” The band threw down a heavy gauntlet with their 2016 debut, *Ego Death*. Produced by Sanford Parker, the recording is a hefty slab of heavy but limber eldritch-psych that brilliantly builds energy in its longer tracks. Though they’ve been semidormant for a little while, Faces of the Bog have recently been in a fairly heavy gigging period—they’ve also been busy writing songs for their next release. **—MONICA KENDRICK**

P.O.S *Swade and Ander Other open. 9 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$20, \$18 in advance. 21+*

When he released the 2009 LP *Never Better* (Rhymesayers), Minneapolis MC and rock musician P.O.S (born Stefon Alexander) had already made a name for himself on his own and with Doomtree, his seven-member hip-hop collective and record label. But *Never Better* announced a new P.O.S—one who had taken his production and lyricism to another level. Its aggressive beats, huge hooks, dexterous flow, and fully articulated punk-rock attitude made it one of the best and most unique rap albums of the year. Full of clattering snare rolls, distorted bass lines, gang vocals, and infectious choruses, the



Dave Rempis **A** CENGIZ YAR

record also contained some of Alexander’s most overtly political lyrics to date; on “Savior Glover,” he raps, “Dehumanize communities like *Black Hawk Down* / They realize immunities then rape them towns . . . The Oval Office and the oil lobby proly listen to Fugazi, singing, ‘This one’s ours; let’s take another’ / Then they dance away clean like Savior Glover.” For *Never Better*’s tenth anniversary, Alexander is hitting the road to perform the album in its entirety, and he’s coming stocked with vinyl reissues of the record and new merch made from old unearthed designs. Indie hip-hop heads won’t want to miss this. **—SCOTT MORROW**

SATURDAY2

CHICAGO PSYCH FEST *See Thursday. Dos Santos headline. Vee Dee, Suns of Hydra, Sip, and DJ Travers open. 8 PM, Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia, \$12. 21+*

THE DEVIL MAKES THREE *The Lost Dog Street Band opens. 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 2047 N. Milwaukee, \$23. 18+*

The members of the Devil Makes Three grew up in New England but formed their trio in California in 2002. They’ve since moved their home base to Burlington, Vermont, and their crisscrossing migrations seem fitting for a group that draws on rootsy styles and sounds from across the continental U.S., including folk, bluegrass, country, blues, and ragtime, with traces of punk and rock attitude. For most of their career the Devil Makes Three have stuck to bare-bones, folky tunes played on acoustic instruments (Pete Bernhard on guitar and lead vocals, Lucia Turino on upright bass, and Cooper McBean on banjo and guitar), and their 2016 full-length, *Redemption & Ruin*, topped *Billboard*’s bluegrass chart. But for their sixth album, August’s *Chains Are Broken* (New West), the Devil Makes Three have gone electric, and in keeping with that bigger, louder sound, they’ve added drums on every song, courtesy of touring member Stephan Amidon. That’s not to say they’ve suddenly become arena rock—they’ve just traded some of their raw bluegrass and

old-time music for folk- and country-rock jams and twangy Americana ballads. Though not every song is a win (the verses on “Native Son” sound too much like Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros’ annoying “Home”), the barroom boogie “Need to Lose” and the slow burner “All Is Quiet” make the change in the band’s style feel like a natural progression. Longtime fans may be worried by the new album’s comparatively sleek vibe, but I doubt it’ll affect the band’s onstage energy. —**JAMIE LUDWIG**

MICK JENKINS See *Pick of the Week*, page 35. *Kari Faux* opens. 9 PM, *Thalia Hall*, 1807 S. Allport, \$22-\$40. 17+

TUESDAY5

REZN, HITTER Melkbelly headlines; *Rezn* and *Hitter* open. 8:30 PM, *Empty Bottle*, 1035 N. Western, \$12. 21+

When I first heard of local outfit **Hitter** coming together—with Adam Luksetich of Foul Tip on guitar, Madalyn Garcia of Lil Tits on bass, Ryan Wizniak of Meat Wave on drums, and Hanna Johnson of Lifesyles and Lil Tits on vocals—I was expecting them to be the coolest, punkiest band I’d ever hear. But these

four steered away from the laser-focused punk of their other bands in favor of scuzzy heavy metal and sleazy, riffed-out rock ‘n’ roll. On the six-track demo tape they released this August (which features two songs that include the word “rock” in their titles), the foursome blast away on simple, raw, wildly distorted AC/DC-flavored riffs that barrel forward with Wizniak’s caffeinated energy and get topped off with Johnson’s in-your-face wails. Hitter aren’t breaking new musical ground, but it’s clear they’re not trying to—what makes their music so good is that you can hear how much fun they’re having, and that will keep anyone coming back. Also playing this show are another local four-piece, **Rezn**, who operate in the realm of metal opposite of Hitter: on their October LP, *Calm Black Water*, they worship at the beyond-stoned, psyched-out, loud-as-hell altar of Sleep and Dead Meadow. —**LUCA CIMARUSTI**

DAVE REMPIIS & JEREMY CUNNINGHAM *Rempis, Cunningham, Mars Williams, Josh Abrams, and Avreeayl Ra* headline; *Rempis and Cunningham* open as a duo. 9:30 PM, *Whistler*, 2421 N. Milwaukee. 21+ FREE

One of the jazz world’s less fortunate elements is the antipathy that often arises between its mainstream and progressive wings. The straight-ahead crowd decries radicals for going too far and losing

the essentials of the music; avant-gardists disparage the stodginess of orthodox practitioners—and neither acknowledges the commonalities between the camps. This residency is an antidote. Alto, tenor, and baritone saxophonist Dave Rempis has been at the cutting edge of Chicago jazz since the mid-90s, when he sought out Ken Vandermark for lessons and ended up joining his band. He possesses iron chops, responsive instincts, and an endless stream of harmonic and rhythmic ideas. Since drummer Jeremy Cunningham moved to Chicago in 2009, his ability to combine unflagging propulsion with a light touch has made him a valued accompanist for Marquis Hill and Caroline Davis. Rempis and Cunningham connected first on a social level and eventually discovered they got along onstage as well. The plan for this monthlong residency (every Tuesday in February) is to play two sets each night, one as a duo, the other with three invited guests who’ll help them map out the space between the stylistic poles. This week the guests are saxophonist Mars Williams, bassist Joshua Abrams, and drummer Avreeayl Ra. —**BILL MEYER**

WEDNESDAY6

ÓLAFUR ARNALDS Arnalds also plays Thu 2/7 (same venue, same time), but that show is sold out. 8 PM, *Thalia Hall*, 1807 S. Allport, \$31-\$45. 17+

At one time, Icelandic composer Ólafur Arnalds’s music, with its gently surging melodies and contemplative prettiness, might have been categorized as new age. But these days that appellation is largely out of fashion, and musicians can evoke generic nondenominational spirituality without being placed in any particular box. Arnalds has taken that leeway and run with it, making bright, emotive soundscapes that exist at the intersection of classical, electronica, film scores, and library music. To create his most recent album, 2018’s *Re:member* (Mercury Kx), Arnalds used custom-built software called Stratus to connect his central piano to two player pianos. When he plays a note, the other instruments are triggered to play two different notes to generate variations in harmony and melody. While that may not sound promising, the results are accessible and dreamy, with notes bouncing back and forth in ripples and echoes—like raindrops in a pond. There are other effects as well; “Unfold” is built around a string-section loop that saws away repetitively, providing a rhythmic foundation for the keyboard pattering, while on “Undir” synth washes crescendo into a beat that wouldn’t be out of place in a (very low-key) club setting. These variations keep the album engaging without ever traveling too far from Arnalds’s characteristic mood of quietly winking transcendence. —**NOAH BERLATSKY** 

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2.17 KANDACE SPRINGS

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2.27 ANN HAMPTON CALLAWAY JAZZ GOES TO THE MOVIES

3.3 JD SOUTHER & KARLA BONOFF

3.4-5 AARON NEVILLE

UPCOMING SHOWS

2.6 MARCUS JOHNSON WITH KATHY KOSINS

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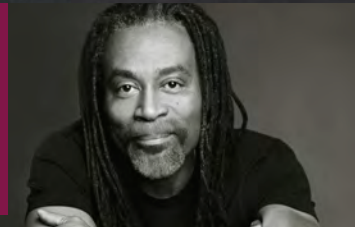
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Allister 3/2, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+
Antlers 4/5, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Better Oblivion Community Center 3/23, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM, 18+
Bijou 3/8, 10 PM, Electric Hotel
Black Label Society 4/30-5/1, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM, 17+
Boys of Fall 4/13, 7 PM, Cobra Lounge
Brohug 3/22, 10 PM, Electric Hotel
Chvrches, Cherry Glazerr 5/2, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM, 17+
Deer Tick, Courtney Marie Andrews 5/7, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM, 17+
Julia Den Boer 3/3, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Doro 5/2, 6 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Kevin Drumm, Rage Thormbones 2/22, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Eels 4/25, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM, 17+
Ensemble Dal Niente 2/24, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Kevin Eubanks Quartet 4/28, 5 and 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 1/31, noon
God Is an Astronaut 9/25, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM, 17+
Aldous Harding 4/14, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Miki Howard 4/8-9, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 1/31, noon
Howie Day 5/16, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 1/31, noon
International Contemporary Ensemble 2/23, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+ **FREE**

Jim James 5/23, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM, 18+
Japanese House 4/29, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM
Eric Lugosch & Phil Heywood 5/5, 1 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM
Matterhorn, Wing Walker 4/26, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
John Mayer 8/14, 7 PM, United Center, on sale Fri 2/1, noon
Meat Wave 5/4, 8:30 PM, Sleeping Village
Mekons 7/14, 8 PM, Hideout
Mark Morton, Light the Torch 3/21, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Mr Eazi 4/6, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Ayla Nereo 4/25, 7 PM, Schubas
New Found Glory, Real Friends, Early November 6/23, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 2/1, noon, 17+
Tobe Nwigwe 3/24, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Joey Pecoraro 4/24, 7 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+
Pedro the Lion, John Vanderslice 5/19, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Neyla Pekarek 4/17, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM
Portland Cello Project 4/12, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM
Jessica Pratt 5/10, 9 PM, Sleeping Village
Projeto Arcomusical 3/17, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Josh Ritter & the Royal City Band, Penny & Sparrow 5/22, 7:30 PM, the Vic, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM, 18+
Rhonda Ross & Rodney Kendrick 4/24, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 1/31, noon

San Holo, Taska Black 4/27, 8 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+
Strange 90's: a Benefit for Jerry Bryant of JBTV with Naked Raygun, Andrew W.K., Local H, and more 3/8, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Twin Temple 3/3, 8 PM, Metro, in the Top Note Theatre
Jimmie Vaughan 6/28, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM
Visceral 4/10, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Summer Walker 3/21, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM
Westerman, Puma Blue 3/10, 8 PM, Schubas, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM, 18+
Wild Belle 4/21, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Works by Catherine Lamb featuring Aperiodic 2/20, 8 PM, Logan Center for the Arts
Yonder Mountain String Band 3/10, 8 PM, Thalia Hall

UPDATED

Mac DeMarco 9/28-29, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 9/28 sold out, 2/19 added, on sale Fri 2/1, 10 AM
Jeff Goldblum & the Mildred Snitzer Orchestra 2/15, 7:30 and 10 PM, Park West, late show added, early show sold out, 17+
Wanda Jackson 3/14, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, canceled
The Love Song of R. Buckminster Fuller by Sam Green with live score by Yo La Tengo 2/26, 6:30 and 10 PM, Thalia Hall, late show added, 17+
Damo Suzuki's Network 5/4-5, 8:30 PM, Constellation, second show added, 18+

UPCOMING

Acid Mothers Temple, Yaman-taka // Sonic Titan 4/13, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Action Bronson, Meyhem Lauren 2/23, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Adrian Belew 4/4, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music
Black Lips, Fucked Up 4/27, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Black Moth Super Rainbow 3/20, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Billy Bragg 4/25-27, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Cannibal Corpse, Morbid Angel, Necrot 3/4, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Claypool Lennon Delirium 4/26, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Clutch 3/13, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Dead & Company 6/14-15, 7 PM, Wrigley Field
Stella Donnelly 3/29, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+
Dream Theater 3/29, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Excision 3/30, 8 PM, Navy Pier, 18+
Bryan Ferry 8/1, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre
Fleetwood Mac 3/1, 8 PM, United Center
Flesh Eaters 3/10, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall
Foals 4/27, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Haelos 3/28, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall
Trevor Hall 3/29, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Hatebreed, Obituary, Terror 4/11, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Iceage, Nadah El Shazly 5/7, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Interpol 2/7, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre
Jawbox 7/27-28, 7:30 PM, Metro, 7/27 sold out
Jerusalem in My Heart 3/26, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Mabel Kwan 2/21, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
La Luz 3/22, 9 PM, Sleeping Village
Lavender Country 4/14, 8 PM, Hideout
Jenny Lewis 3/30, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Meek Mill 3/8, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom
Misfits, Fear, Venom Inc. 4/27, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Mono, Emma Ruth Rundle 6/15, 6 PM, Bohemian National Cemetery
Kevin Morby, Sam Cohen 6/7-8, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Molly Nilsson 3/20, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Ocean Alley 6/10, 8:30 PM, Schubas, 18+
Pigeons Playing Ping Pong 2/15, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

ALL AGES FREE

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Pup 5/4, 7:30 PM, Metro
Todd Rundgren 4/23-24, 8 PM, Athenaeum Theatre
Santana, Doobie Brothers 8/4, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park
Travis Scott 2/21, 8 PM, United Center
Son Volt 4/27, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Spiritualized 4/9, 8 PM, the Vic, 18+
Vince Staples, JPEGmafia 3/12, 8:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, Fri 12/14, 10 AM, 18+
T-Pain 3/29, 8 PM, Park West, 18+
Teenage Fanclub 3/6, 7:30 PM, Metro, 18+
Tortoise 2/17, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Jeff Tweedy 3/22-23, 8 PM, the Vic, 18+
Sharon Van Etten 2/14-15, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Wicca Phase Springs Eternal, Angel Du\$t 3/8, 7 PM, Subterranean
Ric Wilson 4/13, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 18+
Yob, Voivod 3/27, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Zveri 5/31, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

SOLD OUT

Casey 5/24, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge
Dave Davies 4/20, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston
FKJ 5/17, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Jess Glynn 3/30, 7:30 PM, the Vic
Grandson 3/12, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club
Conan Gray 4/8, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge
Beth Hart 4/25, 7:30 PM, Park West, 18+
Hives, Refused 5/20, 7 PM, the Vic, 18+
LP 2/8, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+
Ella Mai 3/3, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Massive Attack 3/23, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Mumford & Sons 3/29, 7:30 PM, United Center
MXPX, Five Iron Frenzy 3/29-30, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Rainbow Kitten Surprise 2/8-9, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre
Robyn 3/6, 8 PM, Aragon Ballroom
Lennon Stella 3/28, 7 PM, Metro



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

SINCE 2003, Eric Isaacson has run **Mississippi Records**, a shop in Portland, Oregon, that launched a wonderfully eclectic and idiosyncratic label in 2004; late last year, he turned over the label half of the operation to filmmaker **Cyrus Moussavi** and experimental musician **Gordon Ashworth**. “We agreed to do it if we could leave Portland,” Moussavi says. And so Mississippi Records is moving to Chicago—though it doesn’t yet have a physical HQ, and it’s been on pause since mid-December while Moussavi and Ashworth transport its stock via a monthlong tour that ends at the **Co-Prosperity Sphere** on Friday, February 1. They’ll screen Isaacson’s documentary **A Cosmic and Earthly History of Recorded Music According to Mississippi Records** as well as shorts from **Raw Music International**, a film collective Moussavi cofounded. Golden Wilson of Olvido Records DJs, and tickets are \$10.

Gossip Wolf knows Chicago drummer **William Covert** from noisy duo **Space Blood** and poppy posthardcore trio **Rust Ring**, but he’s been working solo too: last winter, he says, he tried to “musically encapsulate” the season’s “loneliness and isolation.” His new solo tape, **Music for Synthesizer and Drums**, has a sparse, elemental feel well suited to extreme cold! Covert drops the cassette Friday, February 1, via Canadian label **Coup sur Coup**; the next night he celebrates with a solo set at the **Co-Prosperity Sphere** with the Poison Arrows, Parlour, and Pinebender.

This fall the *Reader* covered **Smashed Plastic**, Chicago’s first vinyl-pressing plant in decades. On Saturday, February 2, Smashed Plastic throws a free grand-opening party at the plant (4200 W. Diversey) that includes an slew of local talent: rapper **Serengeti**, garage-rock squad **Bleach Party**, country stalwarts the **Lawrence Peters Outfit**, shoegazers **Diagonal**, and DJs **Tim Zawada** and **Chuck Wren**. Partygoers can preorder an LP of live performances recorded at the event. —J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

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VALENTINE'S DAY ISSUE

Want to send a note to someone special? An old flame, a missed match, or an ongoing partner? The Reader wants to be your destination for love. Call 312-392-2934 or email snlane@chicagoreadercorp.com to submit your message. First ten words free, \$10 for additional twenty words.

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF PULASKI COUNTY, ARKANSAS DOMESTIC RELATIONS 14TH DIVISION ADELAIDE BUCK PLAINTIFF VS CASE NO. 60 DR 2018-4680 DAVID ROLON DEFENDANT WARNING ORDER The Defendant, David Rolon, is hereby warned to appear in the Circuit Court of Pulaski County in Domestic Relations, 14th Division, 401 W. Markham, Little Rock, AR 72201 within thirty (30) days and answer the Complaint of the Plaintiff, Adelaide Buck, and upon failure of Defendant to do so, the Complaint filed herein will be deemed to be admitted. WITNESS my hand and seal as Clerk of the Circuit Court of Pulaski County, Arkansas, this 9TH day of January, 2019. (1/31)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y19000321 on January 11, 2019 Under the Assumed Business Name of APARTMENT TWO with the business located at: 719 N. HOYNE AVENUE

APT. #2, CHICAGO, IL 60612 The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: JOSEPH BOTTIGLIERO 719 N. HOYNE AVENUE APT. #2 CHICAGO, IL 60612, USA (1/31)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y19000288 on January 9, 2019 Under the Assumed Business Name of THE SOFT TOUCH with the business located at: 3525 N. RACINE AVE APT 2W, CHICAGO, IL 60657. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: TIFFINY YATES 3525 N. RACINE AVE APT 2W, CHICAGO, IL 60657 (1/31)

STATE OF WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURT OUTAGAMIE COUNTY BRANCH 1. Case No. 18 CV 1203 PRN HEALTH SERVICES, INC. 1101 E. South River Street Appleton, WI 54915 Plaintiff v. MARK WELDNER 6134 N. Saint Louis Avenue Chicago, IL 60659, et al Defendants AMENDED SUMMONS THE STATE OF WISCONSIN To each person

named above as a Defendant: You are hereby notified that the Plaintiff named above has filed a lawsuit or other legal action against you. The Complaint, which has been sent to you by U.S. Postal Service First Class Mail, states the nature and basis of the legal action. Within forty (40) days after January 31, 2019, you must respond with a written answer, as that term is used in chapter 802 of the Wisconsin Statutes, to the Complaint. The Court may reject or disregard an answer that does not follow the requirements of the statutes. The answer must be sent or delivered to the Court, whose address is 320 S. Walnut Street, Appleton, Wisconsin 54911, and to Plaintiff's attorneys, whose address is 122 E. Main Street, Little Chute, Wisconsin 54140-0186. You may have an attorney help or represent you. If you do not provide a proper answer within forty (40) days, the Court may grant judgment against you for the award of money or other legal action requested in the Complaint, and you may lose your right to object to anything

that is or may be incorrect in the Complaint. A judgment may be enforced as provided by law. A judgment awarding money may become a lien against any real estate you own now or in the future, and may also be enforced by garnishment or seizure of property.

Dated: January 21, 2019.
VAN LIESHOUT LAW OFFICE
Attorneys for Plaintiff /s/ David J. Van Lieshout State Bar No. 1012641
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SAVAGE LOVE

By Dan Savage

Stealth vs. raw-dogging

Advice for women who want men to wear condoms

Q: I'm a 21-year-old woman, and I have an IUD. I've had sex with quite a few men, and one thing seems to be almost constant among them: trying to fuck without condoms. Many of the men I've been with seem to be perfectly fine and terribly eager to have sex without condoms. This has always angered me. They generally assume or make sure I'm on birth control, which they immediately take to mean condom-free sex is welcome. I don't want to have sex without condoms without being in a committed relationship. I know people cheat and monogamy doesn't mean STIs won't happen, but it's a risk I'm comfortable with. I'm so annoyed by how often men try to get out of using condoms (it's often persistent, even with people I've been seeing a while) that I want to start lying and say I'm not on birth control. The risk of a baby seems to be the only STI most men are concerned with. Is it all right for me to lie and say I'm not on any birth control and explain why I lied later on if things get serious? —I'M UNDERSTANDABLY DISTRESSED

A: Let's get this out of the way first: You're right, IUD, sexually transmitted infections (STI) do happen to people in monogamous relationships. People cheat, people lie, people contract, people transmit. A 2015 study found that people in consensually nonmonogamous (CNM) relationships were no more likely to contract an STI than people in monogamous relationships. The reason? If a person in a monogamous relationship screws around and doesn't use a condom, they can't ask their partner to start using condoms again without drawing attention to their infidelity. If someone in a CNM relationship asks their primary partner to start using condoms again—because a condom broke or fell off or didn't wind up on a cock for some other reason—they're drawing attention to their fidelity. Moving on . . .

Right again, IUD: Babies do seem to be the only STI many men are worried about. Australian researchers conducted a large study about stealthing—the deeply shitty, rape-adjacent practice of surreptitiously removing the condom during intercourse—and they were shocked to discover how common this deeply shitty practice seems to be.

"The researchers estimated in advance that approximately 2% of the sample would report having been stealthed," sex researcher Justin Lehmiller wrote in a blog post looking at the results of the study. "In fact, 32% of the women and 19% of the men surveyed

reported having experienced stealthing. . . . A majority of both groups reported discussing the event with their partner afterward, and most also reported feeling emotionally stressed about it. A majority also considered stealthing to be a form of sexual assault. These results suggest that stealthing is not a rare occurrence and we would do well to study it further."

The researchers didn't ask heterosexual men about being stealthed, and as Lehmiller points out, there are some scattered reports out there about women poking holes in condoms before sex or retrieving them after sex. We don't need a study to tease out the motives of these women—they want to have a child and don't care whether their partners do (and that is not OK)—but we could use a study that asked heterosexual men about their motives for stealthing. One question we should put to these assholes: Are they more likely to "go stealth," i.e., to sexually assault a woman, if they know her to be on some other form of birth control? Or are they just so wrapped up in their own momentary sexual pleasure that they don't give a shit about babies or any of the other STIs?

Moving on to your actual question . . .

Can you lie? Of course you can. Should you lie? In the case of a casual sex partner who might not have your best interests at heart, i.e., some total rando you want to fuck but aren't sure you can trust, I think you can lie and should lie. This lie doesn't do him any harm; it's not like you're telling him you're on birth control when you're not. And if telling this lie inspires some rando to be more careful about keeping the condom on (sometimes condoms fall off by accident), then it's a lie that made the sex safer for you and for him.

And if you get serious about someone you initially lied to about having an IUD—if some dude makes the transition from hot rando to hot boyfriend—and he reacts badly when you tell him the truth, just say (or text) this to him: "I could have waited to fuck you until I was sure you were a good guy. But then you would have missed out on all the awesome sex we've had up to now. Would that have been better? And by coming clean now, I'm basically saying that I think you're a good guy that I can trust. I know that now, but I didn't always know it because I'm not psychic. Now, do you want to raw-dog me or do you want to complain?" 

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PRAIRIE POTHOLE

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